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AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
SECONDARY CAUSES
WHICH
MR GIBBON HAS ASSIGNED
FOR THE
RAPID GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE HON. SIR DAVID DALRYMPLE, BART.
ONE OF THE JUDGES OF THE COURTS OF SESSION AND
JUSTICIARY IN SCOTLAND.

Ταυτην μονον ευρισκον φιλοσοφιαν ασφαλη τε και συμφερον.
JUSTIN MARTYR.

THE SECOND EDITION.

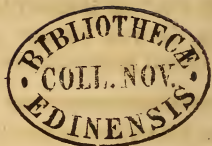
To which is prefixed,
A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF THE AUTHOR.

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GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED

BY 

SIR DAVID DALRYMPLE

TO

RICHARD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

MDCCLXXXVI.

A
BRIEF MEMOIR
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE AUTHOR.

SIR DAVID DALRYMPLE was the eldest of sixteen children of Sir JAMES DALRYMPLE, Bart. of Hailes, in the county of Haddington, auditor of the Exchequer of Scotland, and of Lady CHRISTIAN HAMILTON, second daughter of THOMAS sixth Earl of HADDINGTON, related by these families to many noble and celebrated characters of both kingdoms.

The family of DALRYMPLE, is one of the most ancient and honourable in North Britain, and has produced not a few persons equally eminent in science,

in the cabinet, and in the field. From none in particular have sprung so many great men, who have attained the highest honours in the department of the law, and who have supported the respectability and dignity of the bench by their character and talents.

Two of the lineal ancestors of Lord HALLES, were adherents of the Reformation in its earliest period ; and their descendents were not more distinguished as opponents, on the one hand, of democratical anarchy, and, on the other, of military usurpation, than as zealous friends of constitutional liberty, and of the Revolution.

One of the most noted of his ancestors, and the first of them enobled, was distinguished by great abilities as a general scholar and a lawyer. He was Lord President of the Court of Session in the reign of CHARLES II. in promoting whose restoration he had no inconsiderable share. Having retired to Holland during the latter part of

his reign, and that of his successor, after his return with the Prince of ORANGE he was raised to the Peerage, as Viscount STAIR, and re-instated in his office at the Revolution.

Few families can record a race of so many eminent contemporaries as his sons. His eldest was Lord Advocate, afterwards Lord Justice Clerk; and having been created Earl of STAIR, was finally Secretary of State for Scotland. He is well known to those conversant with the history of Britain during that period, and also as the father of JOHN Earl of STAIR, the illustrious General and Ambassador in the reigns of Queen ANNE and of GEORGE I. & II. His second son was a principal Clerk of Session, of reputation for his profound researches in the history and antiquities of his native country, of which his *Historical Collections* are an able specimen*. His third son, who succeeded his

* Grandfather to Sir JOHN DALRYMPLE, late one of the Barons of Exchequer, and Author of *The Memoirs of Great Britain*.

father as Lord President, was a Judge of great integrity and knowledge. His fourth son was first Physician to the King for Scotland. And the fifth and youngest, grandfather to Lord HAILES, was Lord Advocate for Scotland for nineteen years.

Lord HAILES was born on the 28th of October 1726. He was educated at Eton school, and highly esteemed there, not only for his proficiency in classical learning, but on account of his good dispositions and exemplary behaviour. He went from thence to the University of Utrecht, where he prosecuted the study of civil law, and on the 23d of February 1748, he put on the gown, as an advocate in the Court of Session.

Although possessing an ample fortune, (his father having died in 1750), and attached to the pursuits of elegant literature, he was not seduced from close application to the toils of a

dry profession. As a barrister he was not distinguished ; for his utterance was rapid, and his articulation rather indistinct. But his deep knowledge of law, his unwearied application, the solidity of his judgment, and his probity, raised him to high esteem. The papers which he drew, were characterized by their force in argument, and by elegant and correct simplicity of style. He continued eighteen years at the bar before he was raised to the bench. He did not confine himself during this period to mere technical business, but dignified his profession by uniting scientific researches with those of law, directing the lights of history and antiquity on its obscurities. He amused himself at same time, and continued to do so after this, with the composition of some lighter essays, which he imparted to several respectable periodical publications of England and of this country. But his mind was bent on more important studies,

while he relaxed it by this variety of occupation. Scarcely a year passed, from the date of his first appearance from the press, in which he did not print some original work of his own, or revive and bring into notice some learned or useful performance by others, neglected by his contemporaries, and in danger of being lost to posterity. Every edition almost which he published, he improved. One cannot but wonder how he found time for so many, and such various literary undertakings. But his leisure was not spent in political intrigues, where he never appeared either as a leader or a tool, nor sacrificed in convivial dissipation or voluptuous indolence. In those departments of literature to which he attached himself, he had no rival; these being unoccupied, or engaging the attention of inferior men. Mere literary fame, the passion for which has actuated so many of his contemporaries, although he was well

entitled to the highest, does not seem to have been his end ; he would otherwise have cultivated a different field. Indeed, his taste and his sentiments were not the same with most of those who have obtained the first rank in his native country, as fine writers.

He was no admirer of Mr HUME as an historian ; and to his writings on the principles of belief, of morals, and of government, he was decidedly hostile. His works are free from those marks of vanity, self-sufficiency and arrogance, which are so common and so disgusting. Labour directed by sound judgment, acuteness, fidelity, accuracy, candour rarely equalled ;—these, united with just and delicate taste, unaffected simplicity, and great purity and correctness of style, characterize Lord HAILES as an Author. Truth was his object ; and superior to envy, prejudice, and the ignorant contempt of those who undervalued many of his researches and publications, ha-

ving no views also to pecuniary interest as an author, he was not averse to find it. His works are not debased either by flattery or detraction. He knew how to praise; but he does not bestow this as a partizan, nor with the motive of obtaining it from others. He was not blind to the talents of those from whom he differed, and could admire even while he censured and opposed. When he condemned, he was never warm. He expressed the conscientious dictates of his own mind with firmness, but he generally gave the reasons of his judgment with the utmost modesty and calmness. Rancour, asperity, or personal reflections, nowhere appear in his works.

Possessing considerable talents for ironical writing, and a strong propensity to observe and remark the ridiculous, noticeable even in his gravest works, he never exercised these to distress an individual. His wit was genuine, delicate, inoffensive and cour-

teous, both in conversation and in his writings; and he employed satire and irony only to chastise and discredit folly and vice.

As a judge, he was diligent, attentive, acute and conscientious. In criminal causes, in particular, he appeared to feel for the situation of the accused, while he shewed his sense of the importance and responsibility of his own. His manner of administering oaths was most solemn, calculated to impress the conscience of the witness, and to strike the audience with awe. His whole demeanour on such occasions, especially when it fell to him to pass sentence on the guilty, was well adapted to obtain the end of punishments, *viz.* the security and welfare of the community, and (in cases not capital) the reformation of the offender. The country reposed great confidence in his talents, application, and uprightness; and, though far from being esteemed according to his merits, the first men and the ablest au-

thors of his time, and since, have concurred, however differently minded respecting religion and politics, and even some bigots on the opposite side, to praise his abilities, his investigations, and his character.

It is much to be lamented that this great and excellent man, for such he really was, did not remember, that to prolong a life of studious application, considerable and habitual bodily exercise is required. But except regular motion in his carriage five days of the week, between his seat at Newhailes, five miles from Edinburgh, and the Court, with his journies during the circuit twice a year, and sometimes after it, short excursions to England, his habits were almost quite sedentary. Predisposed by corpulence, and by the form of his body, which was short-necked, he was attacked by symptoms of apoplexy on his way from the Court of Session, when about to come out of his carriage near his own door, at New-

hailes. For a few days, he obtained some relief; but was carried off by a second attack, on the 29th of November 1792, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

Lord HAILES was twice married. His first wife, ANNE, daughter of the Hon. GEORGE BROWN, Lord COALSTON, one of the judges of the Courts of Session and Justiciary, (in the latter of which offices he succeeded him on his resignation in May 1776), died in child-bed. By this Lady, he had one daughter who survives him, and possesses the family estate*.

By his second wife, who is alive, youngest daughter of the Hon. Sir JAMES FERGUSON, Bart. Lord KILKERAN, also one of the judges of the Courts

* Lord WOODHOUSELEE, in his late interesting *Memoirs of Lord Kames*, has preserved a short, but (what he justly calls) a most delicate, tender and pathetic effusion, by Lord HAILES, on her death, in child-bed of twins. It is written in Latin Iambics.

of Session and Justiciary, he had another daughter who was married to her cousin, JAMES FERGUSON, Esq. grandson of Lord KILKERRAN, and apparent heir of Sir ADAM FERGUSON, Bart. of Kilkerran. This lady is dead, and has left one son and two daughters.

The title of Baronet descended to Lord HAILES' nephew, eldest son of JOHN DALRYMPLE, Esq. his brother, formerly Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

A list of his publications, with some short account of most of them, is subjoined. With respect to the following work, none could have been more necessary, and no person could have undertaken this, so eminently qualified for it by his studies and talents.

The great object which Mr GIBBON keeps in view through all his volumes, is to undermine, were it possible, the Christian religion. The purpose in particular, of the 15th and 16th chapters of his first volume, is to invalidate the most striking and obvious proof, of

an external kind, which the history of the world presents of its divine origin. The progress and success of Christianity, without any of those aids possessed by the various superstitions and false religions which have been embraced upon earth, and in opposition to all the prejudices, interests, reasonings, and direct violence engaged against it, is unaccountable on the supposition of its being an imposture. To weaken the force of this fact, so plain and persuasive to every one who inclines to observe it, he has thought it enough to assign five subordinate or secondary causes, which he alleges were sufficient to account for its prevalence, without any other influence.

The fair consideration of most of these causes, and of their operation in the world, would have proved the truth of the gospel as satisfactorily as the ascription of its success to the immediate agency of God. While avoiding however all appearance of a partizan, ne-

ver stating himself as a direct opponent of Christianity, affecting indeed to deliver a narrative of facts without interposing his own sentiments, sometimes even expressing himself as a professed believer of its truth, and an admirer of its genius and spirit, he has traduced and misrepresented his subject, in place of conducting himself as a fair and candid historian. Notwithstanding his respectful mention of Christianity, his readers must have little discernment, if, through all this, they do not perceive the sly insinuation and sarcastic sneer, making it manifest, as Lord HAILES says, "*that he ridicules in sense what he asserts in words.*"

The editor of his Life and Letters, though, like other biographers, not, it should seem, aware of the depravity he exposes, has drawn aside the veil, and confirmed this, exhibiting the real unprincipled motives by which he was actuated as a writer and a man. Chri-

stians indeed, while they deplore the infatuation of such persons, may well glory that the gospel cannot have *them* for its friends!

Previous to the publication of Mr GIBBON'S History, the subject had not been generally studied, and his volumes came forth with all the advantages which their novelty, joined to the charms of composition unusually elegant, could give them. He soon obtained his reward; not only realizing a large sum as the price of the work, but applauses pouring in upon him from all quarters whence he valued them, giving at once celebrity to his History, and fame to its author. It was speedily and highly extolled by Mr HUME and Dr ROBERTSON, the writers whom he had placed before him as his models. Dr FERGUSON also, Dr SMITH, and even Dr CAMPBELL, (seduced, it should seem, by similarity of sentiment on some topics of ecclesiastical-history), ex-

pressed their high admiration of his work, to himself or to his bookseller. The public taste was led by their unqualified panegyrics. His style was not only applauded, with the small reserve of its being quaint in some places, and bearing marks of labour, but the highest eulogiums were bestowed on his fidelity, as if he had written like a witness upon oath, and had referred to no authority which he had not seen with his own eyes. How far he deserved such a character, let those judge who carefully peruse the following work. The strictures however of those who ventured to call in question the merits of the book, were not only treated by himself with proud disdain, but censured and stigmatized by his admirers, as fierce and illiberal abuse. The public were fascinated by the splendour and brilliancy of his language, while with the lightest readers (as Mr HUME said) it did not require too much thought to be popular. Even

men of pleasure were attracted by a writer who, in the grave walk of history, gratified the taste of obscene and sensual minds, set them free from the restraints of strict morality, and furnished them with inuendos and anecdotes, serving to expose Christianity as a fable, and that not very cunningly devised. The first impression, to take his own account in his *Memoirs*, was exhausted in a few days. A second and a third which succeeded, was scarcely equal to the demand. Two pirated editions in Ireland were immediately sold off; the book was on every toilette and table, almost as soon as published; and the historian was crowned by the taste and fashion of the day.

Time has not diminished its sale. Edition has succeeded edition. In this very year, three or four of different size and price have been published in London, and two in Edinburgh at a reduced price, and in a shape to meet

the ability of the humblest purchasers. It is hoped that those who are influenced by the conviction, that the gospel is the revelation of God, will shew as much zeal in recommending the admirable antidote contained in this small volume, as those of a contrary mind manifest in dispersing the poison.

It appears, that about the period at which Mr GIBBON's History first came out, Lord HAILES was particularly engaged in the study of ecclesiastical antiquity. In that year (1776), he translated and printed, *An Account of the Martyrs of Smyrna and Lyons, in the Second Century*, with *Explanatory Notes* more than twice the size of the original. These notes are extremely interesting to all who value truth on this subject; but there is no reference in any of them to the remarks of Mr GIBBON, nor yet in the notes which he added in Latin to an edition of *Lactantius de Justitia*, published in 1777. He published however in

1778 a second volume, and in 1780 a third, to which he gave the title of *Remains of Christian Antiquity*. These were upon the same plan with the first, containing translations from RUINART and EUSEBIUS, from the works of CYPRIAN, and AMBROSE, and from other early writers, with very learned commentaries and notes to all of them. In the second volume of the *Remains of Christian Antiquity*, he first of all alluded to Mr GIBBON, whom he styles “an eloquent and admired historian.”

In that and the following volume, and in the notes to his versions from MINUCIUS FELIX, LACTANTIUS, and TERTULLIAN, and especially in his *Disquisitions*, his great object seems to have been to detect the misrepresentations with which he has demonstrated Mr GIBBON's work to abound. Those who peruse these very valuable performances, will discern with what justice he charges him with the grossest errors in matters of fact (we use

the words of Lord HAILES); with carelessness, in trusting to authority, on subjects he ought to have examined with his own eyes; with adopting fanciful, superficial, and unvouched hypotheses; and with passing off long narratives as truth, of which hardly a single phrase could stand the test of criticism. In fact, while he withholds no expression of praise due to the elegance and energy with which he writes, it will be found that he has established the charge he prefers against him, *viz.* of his speaking sometimes with more asperity and contempt of Christians, than the heathen emperors do in their edicts; and of his having polluted that great Fountain of truth, the history of mankind. He has thus really reduced his boasted and admired work to the level of a romance. All these charges however, made good by one qualified and accustomed to judge of evidence, and to sift the plausible from the certain, were but skirmishes,

compared with the formidable attack on his correctness and veracity, which this work contains. Lord HAILES did not descend to notice all the irony, banter and sneer, with which Mr GIBBON'S work is replete, wherever almost he introduces the subject of Christianity; but pushed forward at once to his most weighty matter, and to reasonings on which he places his firmest reliance. He compared his quotations, and his versions of them; he examined his arguments, confuted his assertions, and overturned his most splendid theories; mixing with all this, occasionally, animadversions on the loose and immoral tendency, in several instances, of his composition, the severity of which every one is able to appreciate, who is acquainted with the mild and dignified manner in which he always administered reproof.

Previous to the publication of *The Inquiry*, various writers had addressed the public on the same subject. And

in the year 1779, Mr GIBBON, roused, as he says, not by Mr DAVIS' attack on his faith, but his fidelity, published an *Anonymous Vindication* of his offensive chapters against this attack, and against the *Remarks* also of Dr CHEL-SUM, Dr RANDOLPH, and others ; but while noticing not only the courteous *Apology* of Bishop WATSON, but almost every name which had then appeared, and even an *anonymous pamphlet in the same cause*, he observes the most perfect silence respecting the various remarks of Lord HAILES, and never indeed took any notice of the animadversions relating to him, in any of his publications. He lived between seven and eight years after the following work was published, and, it appears, was acquainted with its contents ; but while he judged it proper to reply to writers far inferior, in his own estimation, in ability and erudition, in their knowledge of the subject, and in their manner of discussing it, and although

he professed, that regard to his own moral character alone brought him on the field against his other adversaries; he yet declined to support his learning, correctness, integrity, and good morals, all of which were impeached in the following *Inquiry* with great delicacy, but in the most grave and serious manner. In his *Memoirs* indeed, left for posthumous publication, and since given to the world by Lord SHEFFIELD, he writes of the *Inquiry* in the following terms: "The profession and rank of
" Sir DAVID DALRYMPLE has given
" a more decent colour to his style.
" But he scrutinized each separate passage of the two chapters with the
" dry minuteness of a special pleader;
" and, as he was always solicitous to
" make, he may sometimes have succeeded in finding a flaw *." The aspersion which these words contain, is equally groundless as injurious. Those who knew Lord HAILES only in his

* *Miscellaneous Works*, Vol. I. p. 155.

writings, stand in no need of its refutation. There is no doubt, if Mr GIBBON could have defended himself by any plausible arguments, that he would have produced them. His powers were unimpaired to the last, and he was arrested by death while speculating on the probability of his living ten, or twelve, or perhaps twenty years longer, and while projecting new literary undertakings ! but we do not learn that his vindication against the charges of Lord HAILES was any of them. To those who properly estimate the character he has here given of the *Inquiry*, it will seem *an acknowledgment of its accuracy and importance*. Some probably wish that the excellent author had treated his subject with more ardour ; that he had interested his readers, by representing its consequence as well as its truth ; that he had dwelt on the danger and guilt of Mr GIBBON's hypocrisy and misrepresentations, and had warned the world against his pernicious

ous and criminal arts. But Lord HAILES uniformly preserves the coolness and dignity of the judge in all his works; and those who infer from his dispassionate style, that the argument is not of ineffable moment, will find themselves ere long most wofully and eternally mistaken.

Catalogue of the Works of Sir DAVID DALRYMPLE, Bart. Lord HAILES; arranged in the Order of their Publication.*

1. SACRED Poems, or a Collection of Translations and Paraphrases from the Holy Scriptures, by various authors. Edinburgh 1751, 12mo. Dedicated to Charles Lord Hope, with a Preface of ten pages.

2. Proposals for carrying on a certain public Work in the City of Edinburgh.—This *jeu d'esprit* was published about 1753 or -4, and was a parody on a pamphlet by the late Sir Gilbert Elliot. It is dedicated to *the Patron and Pattern of all Castle-builders*. The wit is entirely local, though unfortunately *not temporary*; but is

* This Catalogue was drawn up by the Editor, in consequence of an inaccurate list of the same Works being inserted in an Edinburgh Magazine. It was published in that Magazine in 1793, and has since been re-printed in other publications. Its defects are now supplied.

perhaps as sterling and as delicate as the subject admitted. Lord Hailes, it ought to be remembered, was then a young man.

3. Select Discourses, in number nine, by John Smith, late Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, 12mo. pp. 291. Edinburgh, 1756, with a preface of five pages; many quotations from the learned languages translated; and notes added, containing allusions to ancient mythology, and to the erroneous philosophy which prevailed in the days of the Author; various inaccuracies of stile have been corrected, and harsh expressions softened.

4. World, No. 140. September 4. 1755. A meditation among books.—Ditto, No. 147. Thursday, October 23. 1755. Both these papers are replete with wit and humour, and the last one is introduced with a high character of it and of the Author, by Mr Moore, the editor and chief author of the World.—Ditto, No. 204. Thursday, Nov. 25. 1756. A piece of admirable wit, on *Good Things*, and the propriety of taxing them.

5. A Discourse of the unnatural and vile Conspiracy attempted by John Earl of Gowry, and his brother, against his Majesty's person, at St Johnstoun, upon the 5th of August 1600.—No date of the republication, but the edition and notes by Lord Hailes, who circulated this account, originally published by authority, for the purpose of obtaining additional information on this mysterious incident of Scottish history. These were communicated by Lord Hailes to Dr Robertson, and are acknowledged by him to be the means, with Lord Hailes' conversation on the subject, which enabled him to dispel the darkness in which the subject is involved.

6. A Sermon, which might have been preached in East Lothian, upon the 25th day of October 1761, on

Acts xxvii. 1, 2. "The barbarous people shewed us no little kindness." Edinburgh 1761, pp. 25. 12mo.—Occasioned by the country people pillaging the wreck of two vessels, *viz.* The Betsy, Cunningham, and the Leith Packet, Pitcairn, from London to Leith, cast away on the shore between Dunbar and North Berwick. All the passengers on board the former, in number seventeen, perished; five on board the latter, Oct. 16. 1761. A most affecting discourse, admirably calculated to convince and impress the offenders. A second edition has been lately published.

7. Memorials and Letters relating to the History of Britain, in the reign of James I. published from the originals, Glasgow 1762. Addressed to Philip Yorke, Viscount Royston, pp. 151. From a collection in the Advocate's Library, by Balfour of Denmyln. The preface of four pages, signed, Dav. Dalrymple.

8. The Works of the ever memorable Mr John Hales, of Eaton, now first collected together in 3 vols. Glasgow 1765; preface of three pages. Dedicated to William (Warburton) Bishop of Gloucester.—The edition said to be undertaken with his approbation; obsolete words altered, with corrections in spelling and punctuation.

9. A Specimen of a book, entitled—Ane Compendious Booke of Godly and Spiritual Sangs, collectit out of sundrie parts of the Scripture, with sundrie of other Ballates changed out of prophaine Sangs, for avoyding of Sin & Harlotrie, with augmentation of sundry Gude and Godly Ballates, not contained in the first edition. Edinburgh, printed by Andro Hart.—12mo. Edinburgh, 1765, pp. 42. with a Glossary of 4 pages.

10. Memorials and Letters relating to the History of



Britain, in the reign of Charles I. published from the originals, Glasgow, 1766, pp. 189. Preface of 6 pages, signed Dav. Dalrymple, chiefly collected by Mr Wodrow, Minister of Eastwood, author of the History of the Church of Scotland, a book to which Mr Fox, in his late Posthumous Work, appeals as his chief voucher. Inscribed to Robert Dundas of Arniston, Lord President of the Court of Session, in memory of his friendship and patronage.

11. An account of the preservation of Charles II. after the battle of Worcester, drawn up by himself; to which are added, his Letters to several persons. Glasgow, 1766. pp. 190, from the MSS. of Mr Pepys, dictated to him by the king himself, and communicated by Dr Sandby, Master of Magdalene College.—The Letters are collected from various books, some of them now first published, communicated by the guardians of the Duke of Hamilton, by the Earl of Dundonald, &c. The preface of 4 pages, signed Dav. Dalrymple, dedicated to Thomas Holles, Duke of Newcastle, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

12. The Secret Correspondence between Sir Robert Cecil, and James VI. 12mo. 1766.—This is the correspondence alluded to by Dr Robertson, in his History of Scotland. It was printed from the originals in the Advocate's Library, and from copies in the possession of Lord Hardwicke, and of others, the originals belonging to Mr Erskine of Mar. In the notes, Lord Hailes explains some obscure phrases, and illustrates some historical facts; but he acknowledges that there are various particulars in the letters which he does not comprehend.

13. A Catalogue of the Lords of Session, from the Institution of the College of Justice, in the year 1532,

with Historical Notes. *Suum cuique*—rependet posteritas. Edinburgh, 1767. 4to. pp. 26.—This catalogue was re-printed in 1794, and carried down with additional notes, to that period, by another hand.

14. The Private Correspondence of Dr Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, and his friends, in 1725, never before published. Printed in 1768, 4to. Advertisement, pp. 2. Letters, pp. 10. A fac simile of the first from Bishop Atterbury, to John Cameron of Lochrel, to prove their authenticity.

15. An Examination of some of the Arguments for the High Antiquity of *Regiam Majestatem*, and an Inquiry into the authenticity of the *Leges Malcolmi*, by Sir David Dalrymple, 4to, pp. 52. Edinburgh, 1769.

16. Canons of the Church of Scotland, drawn up in the Provincial Councils held at Perth, A. D. 1242 and 1269. Edinburgh 1769, 4to. pp. 48.—These were first published in the *Concilia Magnæ Britanniae*, being transcribed for that purpose from the chartulary of Aberdeen, by the very learned Mr Thomas Ruddiman. Lord Hailes considered these canons of great importance in the History of Scotland, in so much as to term them "The Scottish Ecclesiastical Code;" yet he says, that he believed few writers on the law of Scotland ever perused them; and added in a note in the following article, "For the benefit of those who may be inclined to publish any tracts concerning the Antiquities of Scotland, I must observe, that twenty-five copies of the Canons were sold." Among several curious facts established by these canons, there is one not generally known or credited, that baptism was at this period administered in Scotland by immersion. See p. 31.

17. Historical Memoirs concerning the Provincial

Councils of the Scottish Clergy, from the earliest accounts to the æra of the Reformation, by Sir David Dalrymple; Edinburgh, 1769, 4to. pp. 41.—Having no high opinion of the popularity of his writings, he prefixes to this work the following motto: “*Si delectamur quum scribimus quis est tam invidus qui ab eo nos abducat? sin laboramus quis est qui alienæ modum statuât industriæ.*” This publication however will interest every one by whom ecclesiastical history is deemed important. The means used to counteract the Reformation, are in particular an object of singular curiosity, and their similarity to the plans which clergymen in all periods have employed, in like circumstances, will strike every one who has paid attention to this subject. These memoirs are illustrated by many ingenious and learned notes.

18. Ancient Scottish Poems, published from the MS. of George Bannatyne, 1568. Edinburgh, 1770. 12mo, Preface, 6 pp. Poems, pp. 221. very curious notes, pp. 92. Glossary, and lists of passages and words not understood, pp. 14. No. 15, 16, 17, reprinted in the third volume of the Annals, 2d edit.

19. The additional Case of Elizabeth, claiming the title and dignity of Countess of Sutherland, now Marchioness of Stafford, by her guardians. Wherein the facts and arguments in support of her claim are more fully stated, and the errors in the additional cases for the other claimants are detected, 4to.—This singularly learned and able case was subscribed by Alexander Wedderburn, afterwards Lord Chancellor and Earl of Roslyn, and Sir Adam Fergusson, Bart. but is the well known work of Lord Hailes. It ought not to be regarded merely as a law paper of great ability, but as a treatise (and is indeed universally so esteemed) of profound research into the history

and antiquity of many important and general points of succession and family history. Introduction, pp. 21. The first four chapters, pp. 70. the fifth and sixth chapters, pp. 177.

20. Remarks on the History of Scotland, by Sir David Dalrymple.—“*Utinam tam facile vera invenire possem quam falsa Convincere.*” *Cicero*.—Edinburgh, 1773. Inscribed to George Lord Lyttleton, in nine chapters, pp. 284. 12mo.—These consist of nineteen chapters, and relate to many circumstances both of a general and particular nature, all of them discovering the singular erudition and acuteness of the author. Lord Hailes expresses, in one chapter, an anxious wish for an impartial account of the Westminster assembly of Divines, in 1644-5. He refers to a journal of their proceedings by Mr George Gillespie, one of the Scotch commissioners. It may be agreeable to some persons to know, that a very full and accurate account of their proceedings is among the MSS. in Dr Williams' library, Redcross Street, London.

21. Huberti Langueti Galli Epistolæ ad Philippum Sydneium Equitem Anglum Accurante D. Dalrymple, de Hailes, Equite. Edinburgh, 1776, 8vo. Inscribed to Lord Chief Baron Smythe.—*Virorum Eruditorum testimonia de Langueto*, pp. 7. *Epistolæ*, 289. *Index Nominum*, pp. 41.—The author of these Letters was a great and a learned man, born in 1518, and died at Antwerp in 1581. He embraced the Reformation in its earliest stage, and was the intimate friend of Melancthon, De Mornay, and other reformers. He was distinguished as a lawyer, and was ambassador from the Elector of Saxony to France, and afterwards his prime minister. He was the author of several works, besides three volumes of Latin Letters, of which these form one,

printed originally in 1633, by Elzevir. Bayle ascribes to him that celebrated book, printed, as was pretended, at Edinburgh, in 1579,—‘*Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos Auc. S. Junio Bruto.*’ He was held in high esteem by Thuanus, the historian; and Du Plessis de Mornay said of him, “*Vixit quemadmodum optimi mori cupiunt.*” Sir Sidney Stafford Smythe, Bart. seems to have been chosen as the patron of the work, not only as a descendant of the truly eminent person to whom they were originally addressed, but as resembling the author, being an eminent lawyer and a Christian; a character which he too supported with great consistency and firmness in an elevated rank. He died in 1778.

22. *Annals of Scotland, from the accession of Malcolm III. surnamed Canmore, to the accession of Robert I. By Sir David Dalrymple. Edinburgh, 1776, 1 pp. 311. Appendix, pp. 51. 4to.*

Tables of the Succession of the Kings of Scotland, from Malcolm III. to Robert I. their marriages, children, and time of their death; and also of the Kings of England and France, and of the Popes who were their contemporaries.

Chronological Abridgment of the Volume, pp. 30. The Appendix contains 8 Dissertations.

I. Of the Law of Evenus and Mercheta Mulierum, pp. 17.

II. A Commentary on the 22d statute of William the Lion, pp. 8.

III. Of the 18th Statute of Alexander III. pp. 5.

IV. Bull of Pope Innocent IV. pp. 6.

V. Of Walter Stewart, Earl of Menteth, 1276, pp. 7.

VI. Of M'Duff, slain at Falkirk, in 1298, pp. 3.

VII. Of the death of John Comyn, 10th February 1305, pp. 4.

VIII. Of the origin of the House of Stuart, pp. 6.

Annals of Scotland, from the Accession of Robert I. surnamed Bruce, to the Accession of the House of Stuart; by Sir David Dalrymple, Edinburgh 1779, 4to. pp. 277.—Appendix, pp. 54. containing,

I. Of the manner of the death of Marjory, daughter of Robert I. pp. 7.

II. Journal of the campaign of Edward III. 1327. pp. 9.

III. Of the genealogy of the Family of Seton in the 14th century.

IV. List of the Scottish Commanders, at the battle of Hallidon, 19th July, 1383, pp. 11.

V. Whether Edward III. put to death the son of Sir Alexander Seton, pp. 8.

VI. List of the Scottish Commanders killed or made prisoners at the battle of Durham, pp. 8.

VII. Table of Kings, p. 1.

VIII. Corrections and additions to Volume I. p. 16.

IX. Corrections and additions to Volume II. pp. 8.

Chronological Abridgment of the Volume, pp. 39.

These were re-printed, in 3 vols. 8vo in 1797, with the addition of several valuable tracts and documents from Lord Hailes' other works, together with a curious tract, published by the late John Davidson, Esq. W. S. and some extracts from Anderson's Essay on the Independence of Scotland, all relating to the history and antiquities of that country.

This, of all the works of Lord Hailes, being most adapted to the public taste, has obtained the highest and most justly deserved applause. "A historian indeed

was wanting, (as the author of the preface to the 8vo edition well observes), whose principal endowments were a sagacious spirit of criticism to distinguish truth from falsehood, and a freedom from prejudice to let that truth be known. He wages war in every page with credulity and imposture, and his industry in exploring the sources of authentic history is equally commendable with the zeal which he has shewn in clearing these sources from every taint of fiction." Lord Hailes' ideas of the qualifications of a historian were indeed very high, and his opinion of the faults and imperfections of the most popular and esteemed historians, would naturally lead him to avoid these. Pity it is, that the same care to shun the refinements of conjecture, the same scrupulous fidelity in resorting to and examining authorities, the same spirit of judicious and sound investigation and reflexion, had not been employed to illustrate subjects more important than those which occur during three centuries of gross ignorance and barbarism! With the regret of every one who has read his work, and who wishes to be well acquainted with the history of their native country, Lord Hailes stopped at a period interesting to all Scotsmen, the accession of the House of Stuart. But as it is, no doubts can be entertained that it will be consulted, appealed to, and admired, as long as the subject is studied. Happy were it for mankind, if all writers of history formed themselves on the plan of his Annals!

23. Account of the Martyrs of Smyrna and Lyons, in the second century, 12mo. with explanatory notes, Edinburgh 1776. Dedicated to Bishop Hurd, pp. 68. Notes and Illustrations, pp. 142.—This is a new and correct version of two most ancient Epistles; the one

from the Church at Smyrna to the Church at Philadelphia; the other from the Christians at Vienne and Lyons, to those in Asia and Phrygia. Their antiquity and authenticity are undoubted. Great part of both is extracted from Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History. The former was first completely edited by Archbishop Usher. The author of the notes says of them, with his usual and singular modesty, "That they will afford little new or interesting to men of erudition, though they may prove of some benefit to the unlearned reader." But the erudition he possessed in these branches is so rare, that this notice is unnecessary. They display much useful learning and ingenious criticism.

24. Remains of Christian Antiquity, with explanatory notes, Volume II. Edinburgh, 1778. 12mo. dedicated to Dr Newton, Bishop of Bristol, Preface, pp. 7. This volume contains, The Trial of Justin Martyr and his Companions, pp. 8. Epistle of Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, to Fabius Bishop of Antioch, pp. 16. The Trial and Execution of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, pp. 8. The Trial and Execution of Fructuosus, Bishop of Tarracona in Spain, and of his two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius, pp. 8. The Maiden of Antioch, pp. 2.—These are all newly translated by Lord Hailes, from Ruinart, Eusebius, Ambrose, &c. The notes and illustrations of this volume extend from p. 47. to 165, and discover a most intimate acquaintance with antiquity, great critical acumen, both in elucidating the sense and detecting interpolations. To this volume is added an Appendix of pp. 22. correcting and vindicating certain parts of Volume I.

25. Remains of Christian Antiquity, Volume III. Edinburgh, 1780. Dedicated to Thomas Balguy, D.D.

Preface, pp. 2. It contains the History of the Martyrs of Palestine in the third century, translated from Eusebius, pp. 94. notes and illustrations, pp. 135. In this and the preceding volume, Mr Gibbon comes frequently under review.

26. Sermons by that eminent divine, Jacobus a Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa. Translated from the originals, 1779, Edinburgh, pp. 47. 12mo.

To this publication was prefixed the following advertisement: "Jacobus a Voragine, an humble predicant friar, for his singular pulpit gifts, was made Archbishop of Genoa. He it was who compiled the *Aurea Legenda*, of which there are so many abridgments, well known to all conversant in the history of the saints. If this specimen proves acceptable to the public, three hundred sermons by the same author, all equally valuable and edifying, may hereafter see the light in an English dress. For preventing mistakes and officious intermeddling, the Publisher thinks it necessary to premise—that he does not profess to make any converts to the faith of the church of Rome. The author, if candidly heard, will speak for himself."—It is curious enough that this publication should have appeared during the ferment in Scotland, respecting the relaxation of the penal laws against popery. It was printed, we believe, at the instance of the late Dr Erskine, with whom, and with the late Dr Macqueen, author of the Letters on Hume's History, as well as other clergymen of character and learning, Lord Hailes kept up much friendly intercourse. Those who have looked into this publication, will readily discern the ironical purpose of the editor. More absurd nonsense certainly never issued from the press! The author died, A. D. 1298, and was the first

translator of the Bible into the Italian language. "*Legenda Aurea* (says Lud. Vives), ab homine oris ferre, cordis plumbei scripta."

27. Octavius, a Dialogue by Marcus Minucius Felix. Edinburgh 1781. pp. 16. Preface. The speakers are Coecilius a heathen, Octavius a Christian, whose arguments prevail with his friend to renounce Paganism, and become a Christian proselyte. Notes and illustrations, pp. 120.

28. Of the manner in which the persecutors died. A treatise by L. C. F. Lactantius. Edinburgh 1782. Inscribed to Dr Porteous, Bishop of Chester, present Bishop of London. Preface, pp. 37. in which it is proved that Lactantius is the author. Text, pp. 125. Notes and Illustrations, pp. 109.

29. L. C. F. Lactantii Divinarum Institutionum Liber Quintus seu de Justitia, 1777. Cum notis Latine, pp. 42.

30. Disquisitions concerning the Antiquities of the Christian Church. Glasgow, 1783. Inscribed to Dr Halifax, bishop of Gloucester, pp. 194.—This small original and most excellent work, consists of six chapters.

Chap. I. A Commentary on the conduct and character of Gallio, Acts xviii. 5. 12. 17.

Chap. II. Of the time at which the Christian religion became publicly known at Rome.

Chap. III. Cause of the persecution of the Christians under Nero. In this, the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon, Vol. I. 4to. p. 641, is examined.

Chap. IV. Of the eminent heathen Writers, who are said by Mr Gibbon to have disregarded or contemned Christianity, viz. Seneca, Pliny, sen. Tacitus, Pliny, jun. Galen, Epictetus, Plutarch, Marcus Antoninus. To the

admirers of heathen philosophers, and to those especially who state between them and the Christian doctrine any consanguinity, this chapter is earnestly recommended.

Chap. V. Illustration of a conjecture by Mr Gibbon, respecting the silence of Dio Cassius concerning the Christians. In this chapter, with extreme impartiality, he amplifies and supports an idea of Mr Gibbon on this head.

Chap. VI. Of the circumstances respecting Christianity that are to be found in the Augustan History.

31. An Inquiry into the Secondary Causes which Mr Gibbon has assigned for the rapid growth of Christianity, by Sir David Dalrymple, Edinburgh, 1786. gratefully and affectionately inscribed to Richard (Hurd) Bishop of Worcester, 4to. pp. 213. In five chapters. This work was translated into Dutch, by W. Van Yverworst, and published at Utrecht, 1793, in 8vo.

32. Sketch of the Life of John Barclay, 4to. 1786.

33. Sketch of the Life of John Hamilton, a secular Priest, 4to. one of the most savage and bigotted adherents of Popery, who lived about A. D. 1600.

34. Sketch of the Life of Sir James Ramsay, a general Officer in the Armies of Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, with a head.

35. Life of George Leslie, an eminent Capuchin Friar in the early part of the 17th century, 4to, pp. 24.

Sketch of the Life of Mark Almon Boyd, 4to.

These lives were written and published as a specimen of the manner in which a Biographia Scotica might be executed; and it is likely that Lord Hailes selected purposely the least interesting.

36. The Opinions of Sarah Dss. Dowager of Marl-

borough, published from her original MSS. 1788. 12mo. pp. 120. with a few foot notes by Lord Hailes, in which he corrects the splenetic partiality of her Grace.

37. The Address of Q. Sept. Tertullian to Scapula Tertullus, Proconsul of Africa, translated by Sir David Dalrymple, 12mo. Edin. 1790. inscribed to Dr John Butler, Bishop of Hereford, preface, pp. 4. translation, pp. 18. original, pp. 13. Notes and illustrations, pp. 135.

This address contains many particulars relating to the Church after the third century. The translator has rejected all words and phrases of French origin, and has written entirely in the Anglo Saxon dialect. In the course of the notes, many obscurities of the original, not adverted to by other commentators, are explained. Some strange inaccuracies of Mr Gibbon are also detected, not included in the misrepresentations in his two famous chapters. See particularly, pp. 108,—130.

Lord HAILES, it is reported, left scarcely any thing in MS. fit for publication. He printed 38 pages 8vo of a Glossary of the Scottish language, the opposite pages blank, for communications and additions; but this was never published, and with all similar works, is now superseded by the curious and complete Etymological Dictionary, by Dr Jamieson, in 2 vols. 4to. A few interesting fragments, it is said, might perhaps be gathered from Lord Hailes' notes on the Scottish statutes, and on the history of Scotland from the accession of James VI. to the English throne to the Restoration.

He had made some progress in a work for verifying the Canon, in an interleaved copy of the New Testament; but those who have seen what is done, do not think that it is sufficiently considerable for publication, and are even uncertain if he intended it for any other besides his own use.

His correspondence must be extremely interesting, and such parts of it as could with propriety be published, would be a most acceptable present to the world.

ERRATUM.

MEMOIR, p. xxi. l. 6. for *inuendos* read *innuendoes*.

CHAPTER I.

MR GIBBON justly observes, “ that a
“ candid but rational inquiry into the progress
“ and establishment of Christianity, may be con-
“ sidered as a very essential part of the history
“ of the Roman empire.”

“ While,” says he, “ that great body was
“ invaded by open violence, or undermined by
“ slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently
“ insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew
“ up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour
“ from opposition, and finally erected the tri-
“ umphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of
“ the Capitol *.”——“ Our curiosity is natural-
“ ly prompted to inquire, by what means the
“ Christian faith obtained so remarkable a vic-
“ tory over the established religions of the
“ earth. To this inquiry, *an obvious, but satis-*
“ *factory answer* may be returned ; that it was

* Mr Gibbon, in his exordium, speaks also of the propagation of the gospel after Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire ; but on this, as foreign to his subject, he does not enlarge.

“owing to *the convincing evidence of the doctrine*
 “*itself, and to the ruling providence of its great*
 “*Author.* But as *truth and reason* seldom find
 “so favourable a reception in the world, and as
 “*the wisdom of Providence* frequently conde-
 “scends to use the passions of the human heart
 “and the general circumstances of mankind, as
 “instruments to execute its purpose, we may
 “still be permitted, though *with becoming re-*
 “*verence,* to ask, not indeed what were the
 “*first,* but what were the *secondary causes* of
 “the rapid growth of the Christian church.”
 i. 535. 536.

That which is placed in the foremost rank of
 “the secondary causes of the rapid growth of
 “the Christian church,” seems so singular, that,
 were it not exhibited in the very words of Mr
 Gibbon, my readers might suspect me of ha-
 ving either misunderstood or falsified the origi-
 nal.

He says, that one of the causes of the rapid
 growth of the Christian church was, “the in-
 “flexible, and, if we may use the expression,
 “the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived,
 “it is true, from the Jewish religion, but puri-
 “fied from the narrow and unsocial spirit,
 “which, instead of inviting, had deterred the
 “Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses;”
 i. 536.

Mr Gibbon hesitates to employ an expression, which, when rightly understood, is altogether apposite. For “the great principle of the Christian church is *intolerance*, and the zeal of the primitive Christians was *intolerant*.”

Christian zeal has no concern with the persons or fortunes of those who are inimical to Christianity; and, *knowing of what spirit it is*, will not call for fire from heaven on its adversaries.

But Christians, believing in *one* God, could not enter into religious society with men who believed, or were willing to have it thought that they believed, in a *multiplicity* of gods*. To speak in scriptural language, they held, that *light hath no fellowship with darkness*; and that *the temple of God can have no agreement with idols*; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

Now, was not this *intolerant* zeal, however purified from a narrow and unsocial spirit, of all causes the most unlikely to accelerate the progress of Christianity?

Yet the evidence produced by Mr Gibbon ought to be heard.

Beginning with Moses, he says, “The sullen obstinacy with which the Jews maintained their peculiar rites and unsocial manners,

* More will be said on this topic when Jewish intolerance comes to be treated of.

“ seemed to mark them out as a distinct species
 “ of men, who boldly confessed, or who faint-
 “ ly disguised, their implacable hatred to the
 “ rest of human-kind ;” i. 537.

In support of this charge, he quotes a trite passage of Juvenal * : and he adds in a note,
 “ The *letter* of this law is not to be found in
 “ the *present* volume of Moses. *But* the *wise*
 “ and the *humane* Maimonides openly teaches,
 “ that if an idolater fall into the water, a Jew
 “ ought not to save him from instant death.
 “ See *Basnage*, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 28.”
 i. 537.

One might be led to infer from this note, that, in the volume of Moses which Juvenal used, there was an ordinance to the following effect : “ Thou shalt not shew the way unto
 “ the Heathen, neither shalt thou disclose the
 “ fountains of water unto the uncircumcised ;” and that, in the *present* volume of Moses, however much it may differ from Juvenal’s copy, the *spirit*, although not the *letter* of such an ordinance, is still discernible †.

* “ Tradidit arcano quodcunque volumine Moses :
 “ Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti ;
 “ Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.”

† Johannes Britannicus, an Italian commentator on Juvenal, roundly affirms, that Moses *did* enact a law of the import mentioned by the satyrist : “ Mo-

But to such inferences we may oppose a few passages selected out of the Pentateuch. "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him : for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt ;" Exod. xxii. 21.—" Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger : for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt ;" Exod. xxiii. 9.—" And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. *But the*

ses," says he, "*willed* that the Israelites should be so totally averse from all other religions, as not to have any intercourse whatever, unless with men of their own faith ; that they should not direct a Heathen on his way, or shew him where water was to be had when he asked it. This is contrary to every sentiment of humanity. But Moses *thought* that such a conduct was not improper towards those who professed a different religion from his own, which, however, was always held, even by the Heathens themselves, to be inhuman and barbarous." [*Voluit* Moses Judæos adeo ab omni alia religione esse aversos, ut ne commercium quidem ullum haberent, nisi cum eo qui eadem sacra colleret ; nec viam erranti, nec aquam quærenti monstrarent : quod contra omnem est humanitatem. *Putavit* tamen Moses non indignum videri adversus eos qui sacra sua non colerent ; quod quidem apud omnes, vel Ethnicos, inhumanum et barbarum habitum semper fuit.] See Juven. Sat. xiv. l. 103. edit. Henninii, p. 650. It may be some apology for "Johannes Britannicus," that, while he misrepresents the law, he denies the divine legation of the lawgiver.

“ stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be un-
 “ to you as one born amongst you, and thou
 “ shalt love him as thyself ; for ye were stran-
 “ gers in the land of Egypt : I am the Lord your
 “ God ;” Levit. xix. 33. 34.—“ For the Lord
 “ your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords,
 “ a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which
 “ regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.
 “ He doth execute the judgement of the father-
 “ less and widow, and loveth the stranger *, in
 “ giving him food and raiment. Love ye
 “ therefore the stranger : for ye were strangers
 “ in the land of Egypt ;” Deut. x. 17.—19.

We are taught from our youth to admire the energy of the words of Dido in Virgil :

I learn to pity woes so like my own †. DRYDEN.

The expression, “ love the stranger, for ye
 “ were strangers in the land of Egypt,” is still
 more emphatical ; it is a precept formed on an
 appeal to the feelings of a whole nation.

And although “ the stranger that *dwelleth*
with you,” may, perhaps, signify, “ one who
 “ had embraced the Jewish faith ;” yet all the
 other passages in which “ strangers” are men-
 tioned, must be understood of “ persons with-
 “ out the pale of the church.”

* ZEYΣ ΦΙΛΟΞΕΝΟΣ, is a more endearing ap-
 pellation, than ZEYΣ ΞΕΝΙΟΣ.

† “ Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.”

If such provisions were made, in the law of Moses, for the security and comfort of Heathens, we may certainly conclude, that nothing, either in the *letter* or *spirit* of that law, forbade the Jews to perform the general offices of humanity to strangers, “whom God loveth.”

He who wishes to avoid this conclusion, must either recur to the exploded hypothesis, that the books of Moses have come down to us in a mutilated state ; or, adopting an hypothesis still more extravagant, he must assert, that the Jews, the guardians of those books, have foisted precepts of humanity into them.

It is hard to discover the meaning or tendency of the sequel of Mr Gibbon’s note : “ *But* “ the *wise* and the *humane* Maimonides openly “ teaches, that if an idolater fall into the water, “ a Jew ought not to save him from instant “ death.”

Are the epithets *wise* and *humane* used ironically, or do they import, that Jewish prejudices overcame the wisdom and humanity of Maimonides ?

The word “ *But* ” connects the two parts of the sentence : and therefore it might be conjectured, that the author meant to say, that although no ordinance, such as Juvenal mentions, can be found in the present volume of Moses ; yet that a wise and humane commentator on

the Mosaical law supposes such an ordinance to have existed heretofore in that law*.

The casuistry of Maimonides was not derived from the Mosaical law, but from the traditional maxims of the Jewish teachers ; and all his wisdom and all his humanity could not restrain him from drinking deep of that stream of corruption.

We need not wonder that such was the case in the eleventh century, at which time Maimonides wrote ; for our Lord himself lamented that, even in his days, the teachers of Israel “ made the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions ;” Matth. xv. 6.

To this wayward casuistry there are other allusions in the writings of the Evangelists. Thus, as it should seem, from the precept, “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” Levit. xix. 18. the Jewish teachers inferred, that an opposite precept, “ Thou shalt hate
“ thine enemy †,” was also the commandment of God. Matth. v. 43.

* The style of Mr Gibbon is generally supposed to be clear ; and yet I meet with many things in his work which seem ambiguous. If, at any time, I should have the ill fortune to misunderstand him, he will pardon my mistake.

† It is probable that the interpreters, who, at this passage, make a marginal reference to Exod. xxxiv. 12. Levit. xix. 18. and Deut. vii. 2. mean only to

The Heathens took no pains to make themselves acquainted with the true import of the law of Moses; and the Jewish casuists, by their base glosses, disfigured it. But *that* law ought not to be judged on the evidence of ignorant cavils, and perverse interpretations.

In this section, intituled, “Zeal of the Jews,” there are other particulars which merit explanation.

Thus, it is said, that “the Jews multiplied “to a *surprising* degree in the east, and afterwards in the west.”

Some reason ought to have been assigned for this *surprising* increase; and the more so, because it is said, presently after, that “it seems “probable that the number of *proselytes* was “never much superior to *that* of *apostates* ;”—that “the descendants of Abraham were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their inheritance, by sharing it too easily with the strangers of the earth ;”—that “whenever “*the God of Israel* acquired any new votaries, “he was much more *indebted* to the inconstant “humour of Polytheism, than to the active “zeal of his *own missionaries* ;”—and that “the *painful*, and even *dangerous* rite of *circumcision*, was alone capable of repelling a

point out the texts in the Pentateuch that were perverted by the Jewish casuists.

“willing proselyte from the synagogue.” i. 539.—541.

There is hardly a phrase in all this historical and critical deduction that can pass unobserved.

The God of Israel, as Mr Gibbon must know, is also *the God of heaven and of earth*; and therefore HE could not be *indebted* for votaries, either to the humour of Polytheism, or to the zeal of Jewish missionaries.

Besides, God never sent missionaries with the purpose of converting Heathens to the belief of the Jewish religion.

Mr Gibbon observes, that the Jews increased *surprisingly*, and at the same time he supposes, that this *surprising* increase was not owing to any accession of proselytes.

Heathen writers seldom, if ever, speak honourably of Judaism; and yet they seem agreed, that the number of proselytes to that religion was great.

In the fragments of Seneca, we read, “So
“universally do the customs of *that most flagi-*
“*gitious people* prevail, that now they are re-
“ceived all over the world. *The conquered*
“*have given laws to the conquerors* *.”

* “*Usque eo sceleratissimæ gentis consuetudo*
“*convalluit, ut per omnes jam terras recepta sit.*
“*Victi victoribus leges dederunt.*” Seneca ap. Augustin. De civitate Dei, vi. 11.

And Tacitus says, "*The worst of men every where, despising the religious rites of their own country, were wont to pile up their contributions and alms at Jerusalem *.*" And again, "*The Jews instituted the rite of circumcision, in order to distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind. They who have revolted to the customs of the Jews do the same; and the first thing that they are taught, is, to despise the gods, and to divest themselves of patriotism †.*"

Seneca and Tacitus, however improperly they may have judged of the character of the proselytes to Judaism, could not be mistaken in this fact, that there were such proselytes, and those so numerous, as to excite the attention, and perhaps the fears, of the Heathen world.

The decencies of modern language will not allow any detail with regard to "*the painful,*

* "*Nam pessinus quisque, spreis religionibus patriis, tributa et stipes illuc congerebant.*" Hist. v. 5.

† "*Circumcidere genitalia instituere, ut diversitate, noscantur. Transgressi in morem eorum idem usurpant; nec quidquam prius imbuuntur, quam contemnere deos, exuere patriam.*" Hist. v. 5. It is amusing to remark the zeal which the politician Tacitus, himself a fatalist or a Sceptic, expresses for Polytheism and idolatry.

“and even *dangerous* rite of circumcision.” We may, however, observe, that it *could not* have deterred that sex to whose devotion Mr Gibbon ascribes much of the success of Christianity, from avowing the Jewish religion; and that it “*did not* repel willing proselytes “from the door of the mosque.”

Mr Gibbon observes, that “the descendants “of Abraham—were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their *inheritance*, by sharing it too easily with the strangers of the “earth.”

But the Jews could not imagine that their *temporal* inheritance was in danger of having its value diminished by the coming of proselytes amongst them; and as for a *spiritual* inheritance, although many sects may be apt enough to exclude adversaries from a portion in it, yet they are generally willing to share it with proselytes.

Granting “the humour of Polytheism to “have been inconstant *,” it remains to be explained, how that inconstancy should have led Polytheists to embrace the doctrine of Theism.

* The Heathens were more inclined to receive new gods, than to dismiss old ones. For example, shapeless masses of stone were the most ancient idols. Terminus, a god of that sort, would not make way for the Capitoline Jupiter; and his claim of possession appears to have been allowed.

Again, it is said in the same section, that neither violence, nor art, nor example, “ could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks * ;” and it is added, “ The current of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent.” i. 538.

What are we to understand by all this ? Does Mr Gibbon speak in his *own* character, or in *that* of an unbeliever ?

Was it reasonable that the Jews should associate with the Mosaical institutions a mythology unsupported by proof, and whose usurped authority the wisest amongst the Heathens had disclaimed ; and would it not have been absurd for them to have assumed any part of a garb which did not sit easy on those who had long used it ?

This, however, is not all. The Jews could not associate “ the elegant mythology of the Greeks with the institutions of Moses ;” for the Greeks were Polytheists, and the Jews pro-

* Mr Gibbon contrasts the moderation of the Roman Emperors with the jealous prejudices of their subjects ; and he remarks, that “ the *polite* Augustus *condescended* to give orders, that sacrifices should be offered for his prosperity, in the temple of Jerusalem.” Decline and Fall, i. 538.

fessed pure Theism. Now, I should wish to know, how the belief and worship of *many* gods could be harmoniously united with the belief and worship of the *One* God? It is hard then to accuse that unfortunate people of sullenness and obstinacy, for not endeavouring to accomplish impossibilities.

Of old, indeed, they went a considerable length in the way of accommodation. They resorted to Egypt, Phœnicia, and Syria, to the magazines from which the Greeks got the *elegancies* of their mythology, and with Jehovah they associated any other divinity whose worship happened to be fashionable amongst the neighbouring nations : for they vainly imagined, that the ONE and SELF-EXISTENT, when he condescended to be, in an especial manner, the God of a particular people, would communicate his honour to idols, the representation of deified men, or of material objects.

If our sacred books may be credited, this experiment of *association* proved fatal to the church and state of the Jews ; and it is admitted on all hands, that no farther attempts of the like preposterous nature were ever made : So, from the memorable æra of the Babylonish captivity, the devotion of the Jews became *contracted into the narrow channel* of the belief of *One* God, instead of gently expanding itself in

the various and shallow tracts of Polytheism.

The sad consequences ensuing from the attempt to admit intercommunity of religions into the theocratical system, will serve to account for a circumstance in the history of the Jews, with which Mr Gibbon is greatly, and, I suppose, seriously embarrassed. He says, that “the devout, and even scrupulous attachment to the Mosaic religion, so conspicuous among the Jews who lived under the second temple, becomes still more surprising, if it is compared with the *stubborn incredulity* of their forefathers.” i. 538.

Instead of “*stubborn incredulity* of their forefathers,” Mr Gibbon ought to have said, “their propensity to idolatrous worship.” For the ancient Israelites entertained no doubts as to the reality of the miracles performed at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Indeed when they worshipped Jehovah under symbols of their own devising, and did homage to the divinities of the Heathen, they violated the covenant, and transgressed the fundamental law of their government ; yet still they meant not to abjure “the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

It is true, that they were *stubbornly incredulous*, but in a different sense from that which Mr Gibbon figures to himself ; for they mur-

mured at every obstacle in their way, and disbelieved the future accomplishment of God's promises*.

After having mentioned the attachment of the Jews to the Mosaic religion, as he calls it, Mr Gibbon proceeds to give a delineation of that religion for which Christians were zealous. In this he appears to have copied some Christian divine, and to have added a few touches of his own, which are easily discernible.

He next observes, that "the Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messias, foretold by their ancient oracles, *respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion* ; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and were desirous of imposing them on the Gentiles, who continually-augmented the number of believers. These Judaizing Christians seem to have argued, with some degree of plausibility, from the divine origin of the Mosaic law, and from the immutable perfections of its great Author."

Mr Gibbon is at pains to place in the best point of view the arguments which he supposes the Judaizing Christians to have used; and then he concludes with the following note.

* Heb. c. iii. v. 7.—19.; c. iv. v. 11.

“ These arguments were urged with great ingenuity by the Jew Orobio, and *refuted* with equal ingenuity and candour by the Christian Limborch.” i. 543.

It has been remarked, that there was no occasion for Mr Gibbon to have entered into a detail of *refuted* arguments ; or, at least, that to what Orobio urged, he ought to have added what Limborch answered.

But I pass to something more material. It is said, that “ the Jewish converts acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messias,” and “ *respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion.*” i. 542. Did their Christian faith amount to no more than this ? if so, they were far, very far indeed, from discerning the nature and offices of Christ ; and “ the brethren of the circumcision” must have differed little from “ the Polish brethren.” This requires explanation.

There follows, in the work of Mr Gibbon, a Dissertation on what he calls *the Nazarene church of Jerusalem*.

In it he attempts to prove, that throughout the first century, and even during some part of the second, there were, in effect, *two* Christian churches ; that circumcision, and other rites of the Mosaical law, were practised in the one,

but in the other rejected *. Mr Gibbon seems to hold, that the former, or *the Nazarene church of Jerusalem*, had the fairest pretences to orthodoxy; but that, being overpowered by the number of Gentile converts, and compelled by the necessity of the times, it agreed to relinquish its primitive rites, and to become incorporated with the latter, or *the church of the uncircumcision*.

I do not propose to examine minutely a dissertation foreign to the great object of Mr Gibbon's inquiries; and yet there are some circumstances in it which deserve attention.

"The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were
 "all *circumcised* Jews, and the congregation
 "over which they presided, united the law of
 "Moses with the doctrine of Christ." i. 544.
 In proof of this, there is reference made to Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* l. 4. c. 5.

* Toland, in his malicious rhapsody, called *Nazarenus*, goes farther. He says, that "the Jews, though associating with the converted Gentiles, and acknowledging them for their brethren, were still to observe their own law throughout all generations; and that the Gentiles, who became so far Jews as to acknowledge *One God*, were not, however, to observe the Jewish law; but that both of them were to be for ever after united in to one bond or fellowship;" Preface, p. 5. *This* the candid and consistent author of *Pantheisticon* is pleased to call *the original plan of Christianity!*

Eusebius, no doubt, says, that the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were Hebrews by birth, and “of the circumcision.” He adds, that the church at Jerusalem was altogether composed of believing Hebrews.

But is it certain that all those fifteen bishops were “*circumcised* Jews?”

“Of the circumcision” may be a periphrasis, distinguishing the Jewish people from the Gentiles, without any reference being intended to the peculiar rite of circumcision; and there is no evidence, that, *after* the burning of the temple in the days of Vespasian, the Hebrew Christians persevered in the use of that rite.

Besides, it will be remarked, that Eusebius [l. iv. c. 5.] speaks of the succession of bishops at Jerusalem until the time at which the Jews were finally scattered, in the eighteenth year of Hadrian. Now, from the burning of the temple under Vespasian, to the final scattering under Hadrian, there was an interval of no more than *sixty-four* years; so that the greatest part of the fifteen bishops must have been born, and, probably, all of them may have been born before the burning of the temple*; hence they

* If we suppose, as is most likely, that Jude, the fifteenth bishop, was younger than his predecessors, and that he had attained to the age of sixty-four at the time when Hadrian subdued and destroyed Je-

might have been circumcised, although the practice of circumcision had ceased amongst the Hebrew Christians at that remarkable æra.

Accordingly, we learn from Eusebius, that Justus, the third bishop of Jerusalem, was a converted Jew *: So the circumstance of his having been actually circumcised, affords no presumption whatever, that the Hebrew Christians continued to practise the rite of circumcision.

It is next said, that “ the Gentiles, with the
“ approbation of their peculiar apostle, rejected
“ the intolerable weight of Mosaical cere-
“ monies.” This is extraordinary ; for we learn from Scripture †, that the apostles and elders at Jerusalem did, in the most deliberate and solemn manner, pronounce the Gentiles to be free from that weight, which, it is here said, they *rejected* with the approbation of their *peculiar* apostle.

Jerusalem, it will follow, that all the fifteen bishops were born before the burning of the temple under Vespasian.

* Της εν Ἱεροσολυμοῖς ἐπισκοπῆς τὸν θρόνον Ἰουδαῖος τις ὀνομα Ἰustus, μυριῶν ὁτῶν ἐκ περιτομῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν τηλικαυτὰ πεπιστευκότων, εἰς καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτῶν, διαδέχεται. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 35. The words, εἰς καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτῶν, which imply, that Justus himself was a convert, are omitted in the version of Valesius ; and consequently this fact cannot be known to those who consult his version alone.

† Acts xv. 1.—19.

Toland, it is true, took much pains to separate Paul from the other apostles. But I imagined that the notions of Toland, and of his copist Lord Bolingbroke, had been long ago exploded by every one conversant in the Scriptures *; and it is singular that they should have been again produced by Mr Gibbon, an avowed friend of Christianity.

* In the passage under consideration, Mr Gibbon has committed a small mistake. He says, "The Nazarenes retired *from the ruins* of Jerusalem to "the little town of Pella, beyond the Jordan;" p. 545. But it was *before* the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, that the Jewish Christians retired from the devoted city; Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. iii. c. 5. This retreat was in consequence of the injunctions of our Lord, Matth. xxiv. 15. Eusebius says, ἔ μιν ἀλλὰ • και τς λαος της εν Ἱεροσολυμοις εκκλησιας, κατα τινα χρησμον τοις αυτοθι δοκιμοις δι αποκαλυψιως δοθεντα προ τς πολεμς μετανασθηναι της πολεως, και τινα της Περικιας πολιν οικειν κεκελευσμενς. Πελλαν αυτην ονομαζουσιν. κ. τ. ε. That which Eusebius here terms "a revelation given to approved or respectable persons," appears to have been an impression made on their minds as to the just sense of the words of our Lord, Matth. xxiv. 15. It is probable, that until the Christians saw the standards of Rome erected in Judea, they understood not the full import of the phrase, "abomination of desolation."---Epiphanius, in his careless and incorrect manner, says, that the warning to remove from Jerusalem was given by an angel; De Ponderibus et Mensuris, l. xiv. tom. 2. p. 171. edit. Petav. 1682; yet elsewhere he truly says, that the Christians removed in consequence of Christ's injunctions. Hæres, 29. t. 1. p. 123.

This hypothesis concerning the Nazarene church, in its nature extravagant, and dangerous in its consequences, ought not to be ascribed to Mr Gibbon. He has unwarily adopted the fancies of Mosheim, and presented them to the public in an elegant English dress.

Mosheim, with very eminent literary abilities, could not always resist the temptation of appearing singular: having disengaged himself from the trammels in which his countrymen moved heavily, he sometimes wandered from the road.

A passage in Sulp. Severus, which Mosheim admits to be "obscure and ill arranged," * furnished him with materials for a system highly praised by Mr Gibbon, i. 546. *n.* 21.

It required the genius of Mosheim to work up such flimsy materials, and his reputation to make them fashionable.

Sulp. Severus thus speaks: "Et quia Christiani [in Palestina] ex Judæis potissimum perstabantur, (namque tum Hierosolymæ non nisi ex circumcissione habebat ecclesia sacerdotem), militum cohortem custodias in perpetuum agitare jussit, quæ Judæos omnes Hierosolymæ aditu arceret. Quod quidem Christianæ fidei proficiebat, quia tum pene

* De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantin. M. p. 325. note *.

“ omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione
 “ credebant ; nimirum id, Domino ordinante,
 “ dispositum, ut legis servitus a libertate fidei
 “ atque ecclesiæ tolleretur ; ita tum primum
 “ Marcus e gentibus apud Hierosolymam epis-
 “ copus fuit *.” It is irksome for one to at-
 tempt a translation, without having a clear ap-
 prehension of the import of the original. The
 meaning of Sulpitius seems to be this : “ And
 “ as the Christians [in Palestine] were under-
 “ stood to be chiefly composed of Jews, (for at
 “ that time the church of Jerusalem had no
 “ priest but of the circumcision), Hadrian or-
 “ dered a band of soldiers to keep continual
 “ watch, and to exclude all Jews from entrance
 “ into Jerusalem, which indeed proved advan-
 “ tageous to the Christian religion ; for, in
 “ those days, almost every one who acknowl-
 “ ged the divinity of Christ, observed the
 “ Mosaical law. But Providence so ordered it,
 “ that the thralldom of the law might be re-
 “ moved from the liberty of the faith and the
 “ church ; so then, for the first time, one from
 “ the Gentiles, *Mark*, became bishop of Je-
 “ rusalem.”

Let us now see the commentary of Mosheim
 on this confused text. “ It is certain,” says

* Hist. Sacr. l. 2. c. 31.

he, “ from the words of Sulpitius, 1. That the
“ Christians in Palestine, who were of Jewish
“ original, joined the ceremonial law with the
“ worship of Christ, so long as any hope re-
“ mained of the restoration of Jerusalem, after
“ its *first* destruction by Titus. 2. That when
“ all hope of such an event ceased, at the *se-*
“ *cond* destruction by Hadrian, the greatest part
“ of those Christians rejected the Mosaical law,
“ and chose Mark, a stranger, for their bishop.
“ This they certainly did, lest a bishop of the
“ Jewish nation, through his innate affection
“ for the law of his people, should insensibly
“ restore the abrogated ceremonies. 3. That
“ the abolishing of the Mosaical law was oc-
“ casioned by the severity of Hadrian, who
“ surrounded the site of Jerusalem with his
“ soldiers, and debarred all Jews from entrance
“ therein. This, says Mosheim, is not so clear-
“ ly explained by Sulpitius as it ought to have
“ been, but his omissions may be easily sup-
“ plied. While the Christians in Palestine con-
“ tinued to obey the law of Moses, they were
“ considered by the Romans, and not without
“ some appearance of reason, to be Jews ; so
“ the prohibition of entering into Jerusalem
“ extended to them also. But the Christians,
“ being exceedingly desirous of visiting that
“ city, renounced the ceremonial law, and, to

“ prove the sincerity of their conduct, elected
 “ a stranger for their bishop. This separation
 “ having been once made, the Romans al-
 “ lowed that access to the Christians which was
 “ denied to the Jews.” All this, according to
 Mosheim, may, with moderate attention, be
*drawn out of the words of Sulpitius **.

But Mosheim’s alembic is capable of much
 more : “ It remains to be inquired,” says he,
 “ why the Christians should have been so de-
 “ sirous of having access to Jerusalem, as rather
 “ to renounce their national law, and to place
 “ a stranger over them for their bishop, than
 “ to remain deprived of that permission ?” On
 this point Sulpitius is silent, but his commen-
 tator enlarges. “ Hadrian had erected a new
 “ city in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem,
 “ which he called *Ælia Capitolina*, and which
 “ he endowed with ample privileges. The
 “ Christians residing in the little town of Pella,
 “ and in the adjacent country, were incommo-
 “ diously lodged, and therefore were very de-
 “ sirous of being admitted as citizens in the
 “ new colony ; so most of them thought fit to
 “ abolish the ceremonial law instituted by Mo-
 “ ses ; and by thus distinguishing themselves
 “ from the Jews, they obtained admittance in-

“ *Hæc omnia ex Sulpitio, valde licet negligenter*
 “ *scribat, mediocri attentione adhibita, eliciuntur.*”

“ to *Ælia Capitolina*. It is *exceedingly probable*,
“ that that very Marcus, whom they chose for
“ their bishop, suggested this project to them.
“ His name shows him to have been a Roman ;
“ and, *no doubt*, he was known to the Roman
“ governors in Palestine, and *perhaps* he was
“ related to some principal person amongst
“ them.”

Mosheim seems to have perceived that his hypothesis was leading to strange conclusions, and therefore he thought fit to check himself a little. “ I would not have it understood,” says he, “ that the Jewish Christians were led
“ to reject the law of Moses merely from the
“ desire of establishing themselves at *Ælia*
“ *Capitolina*. Undoubtedly Marcus, who per-
“ suaded them to the measure, did also demon-
“ strate, by weighty arguments, that Christ had
“ taken away the authority of the Mosaical
“ rites. His arguments, however, would have
“ made less impression on the minds of persons
“ bred up, from their tender years, in the law
“ of Moses, had they not longed to be made
“ partakers of the conveniencies and privileges
“ of the new colony, and to be relieved from
“ the vexations and hardships which the Jews
“ suffered under the government of Hadrian ;
“ and, in a word, had not the second destruction

“ of Jerusalem made them despair of ever being
“ holding the temple rebuilt, and liberty of
“ worshipping God, after the manner of their
“ own laws, restored to the Jewish nation.”

Thus we see, that had it not been for the arguments of Marcus, co-operating with the conveniency of residing at *Ælia Capitolina*, the Jewish Christians of Palestine might have continued for ages to use the Mosaical rite of circumcision, and the Christian rite of baptism, to celebrate the passover, and to partake of the holy communion. All this is proved from an obscure, ill-arranged passage in an incorrect writer of the fifth century, who, to appearance, says no such thing ; and, which is more singular still, it is proved by a critic who undertook to confute the *Nazarenus* of Toland ! When we see the extravagancies of the learned, well may we pronounce, that “ Pride was not made
“ for man.”

It does honour to the good sense of Mr Gibbon, that, while transcribing from Mosheim, he has softened some circumstances, and omitted others : for all his eloquence would not have been sufficient to convert the entire narrative from romance into history.

Mr Gibbon seems to think, that the remnant of the Nazarenes of Jerusalem, or the Jewish

converts who adhered to the Mosaical law, were branded with the name of *the Ebionites* *.

* It is generally held, that the Ebionites were so called from the Hebrew word *Ebjonim*, that is, *poor*. Hence Toland says, "They were called, by way of contempt, *Ebionites*, or *beggars*. just as the first Protestants in Flanders, *gueux*." Nazarenus, p. 26. But unfortunately the name *gueux* is of political, not religious origin. The observation, however, was well meant.

Mr Gibbon, i. 546. not. 23. says, "Some writers have been pleased to create an *Ebion*, the imaginary author of their sect and name. But we can more safely rely on the learned Eusebius, than on the vehement Tertullian or the credulous Euphrius."

The question is not important, yet it may still be doubted, whether there did not exist a man named *Ebion* or *Hebion*, who was the leader of the sect called *Ebionites* or *Ebionæans*. Eusebius indeed says, "The ancients commonly called them *Ebionites* who entertained a poor and low opinion of Christ."

Ἐβιωναῖοι τέλει οικείας ἐπεφημιζόν οἱ πρῶτοι, πτωχοὶ καὶ ταπεινοὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ δοξολογίας. Hist. Eccles. iii. 27.

This is taken from Origen, *de Principiis*, iv. who says, "we do not receive those things in the sense of the Ebionites, the poor in understanding, men whose name corresponds with the meanness of their intellects; for *Ebion*, in Hebrew, signifies *poor*."

ἐκ ἐλαμβανόμεν τὰ πάντα ὡς οἱ πτωχοὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ Ἐβιωναῖοι, τῆς πτωχείας τῆς διανοίας ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς Ἐβίων γὰρ ὁ πτωχὸς παρ' Εβραίοις ὀνομάζεται. Here the existence of such a person as *Ebion* is not denied. The passages in Tertullian alluded to by Mr Gibbon, are, *de Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, c. 33. and *d. Carne Christi*, c. 14.

He adds, for which he has the authority of the Fathers, from Justin Martyr to Augustine, that the Ebionites were held to be heretics : and it is to be presumed, that no man in our days will dispute the justice of that appellation.

But he proceeds, in a note, p. 546. to observe, that “ there is some reason to conjecture, that “ the family of Jesus Christ remained members, “ at least of the more moderate party of the “ Ebionites.”

He quotes no authority for this slight conjecture, which, however slight, has a meaning. If *we* also may be permitted to conjecture, Mr Gibbon alludes to the following passage in the ecclesiastical history of Le Clerc. “ *It may be* “ that, amongst the inhabitants of Choba in “ the apostolical times, there were some Naza- “ renes who gave themselves out to be kinsmen “ of our Lord, and *perhaps* were so *.” The unvouched *may be* and *perhaps* of Le Clerc

* “ *Nec quidquam vetat* inter temporum Aposto- “ licorum Chobenses fuisse quosdam Nazarenos, qui “ se *δισποσους*, dicerent, et *fortasse* essent.” Hist. Eccles. p. 477. note 3. This may be true, but it is exceedingly improbable. See Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. ii. c. 23. l. iii. c. 11. c. 20. c. 32. Persons any way connected with our Lord, appear to have been highly honoured in the Christian church throughout the first century.

hardly merited a place in the works of Mr Gibbon.

Mr Gibbon might, with propriety, have said something concerning the faith as well as the rites of the Ebionites, that remnant of the church of the Nazarenes, whose primitive tradition could have laid claim to be received as "the standard of orthodoxy;" and this the more especially, because, as Mr Gibbon knows, Toland declares it to be the concurring opinion of the Fathers, "That the Nazarenes and Ebionites affirmed Jesus to have been a mere man," &c. *

Although Mr Gibbon be concise in his account of the Ebionites, he is copious in describing the character and opinions of the Gnostics. "They were," says he, "distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christian name;" and, which is rather singular in men of that description, "they were, for the most part, averse to the pleasures of sense."

He adds, "that the general appellation [of Gnostics], which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of their adversaries †."

* Nazarenus, p. 27.

† The expression, "envy of adversaries," proves

Let us now see what that knowledge was for which they prided themselves, or which their adversaries envied in them.

According to Mr Gibbon, they took exceptions at every part of the Old Testament, from the creation of the world, to the end of the Jewish theocracy. He adds, in a note, "The
" milder Gnostics considered Jehovah, the Cre-
" ator, as a being of a mixed nature between
" God and the demon. Others confounded
" him with the evil principle."

So much for their judgment of the Old Testament, and for their belief in a Deity.

Now for their gospel-faith. "It was their
" fundamental doctrine, that the Christ whom
" they adored as the first and brightest eman-
" ation of the Deity, appeared upon earth, to
" rescue mankind from their various errors
" [Paganism and Judaism], and to reveal a *new*
" system of truth and perfection."

To complete the picture, Mr Gibbon adds,
" They blended with the faith of Christ many
" *sublime*, but obscure tenets, which they deri-
" ved from Oriental philosophy, and even from
" the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eter-

that Mr Gibbon has not discovered any thing in the writings of St Paul or St John alluding to the name of *Gnostics*.

“nity of matter, the existence of two principles,” &c.

Such was the result of the *politeness* and *learning* of the Gnostics. The portrait may, for aught I know, bear a perfect resemblance to them; but hardly can any feature of Christianity be discerned in it, excepting this, that the Gnostics and the Christians concurred in believing the existence of the devil; those, as composing a *part* of the Divinity; and these, as the adversary of God and man*.

With respect to the Gnostics, it is further said, that “they were imperceptibly divided into more than *fifty* particular sects:—*each* of the sects could boast of its bishops and congregations, of its doctors and *martyrs*,” i. 550. This circumstance seems important, if it be meant, that *each* of the *fifty* sects of the Gnostics produced “men who suffered death for their adherence to the faith in Christ.”

Mr Gibbon quotes Eusebius as his voucher, [*Hist. Eccles.* l. iv. c. 15.] The words of that historian are to the following purpose: “To the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, there is added an account of other martyrdoms in Smyrna about the same time; and

* He had said before, that the deity of the Gnostics was of a mixed nature, and sometimes confounded with the evil principle.

“ amongst the sufferers was Metrodorus, appearing [or esteemed] to be a presbyter in the error of Marcion, who, having been delivered over to be burnt, was put to death *.”

Here Eusebius mentions, amongst the martyrs at Smyrna, *one* person esteemed to be a presbyter of the sect of Marcion; and yet that historian is appealed to as the *single* witness for proving, that “ *each* of the *fifty* sects of the Gnostics could boast of its *martyrs*.”

This is remarkable, for at that very moment Mr Gibbon had the article in Bayle’s Dictionary, v. *Marcionites*, under his view.

Now, Bayle admits that the Gnostics in general did not yield themselves to martyrdom in the cause of Christ. His inclination to contradict and to expose Jurieu, who had affirmed this, naturally led him to maintain the contrary. But the evidence of Tertullian was too

* Έν τη αὐτῇ δὲ περὶ αὐτῆς γραφῇ καὶ ἄλλα μαρτυρία συνήπτο κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν Σμυρναὶν πεπερασμένα ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὴν περιόδον τῶ χρόνῳ τῆς τῆ Πολυκαρπῆ μαρτυρίας· μεθ’ ὧν καὶ Μητροδώρος τῆς κατὰ Μαρκιωνίαν πλάνης, πρεσβυτέρου δὴ εἶναι δοκῶν, περὶ παραδοθείς ἀνηγεται, *Hist. Eccles.* l. iv. c. 15. Mr Gibbon might have added Asclepius, supposed to be a Marcionite bishop, who suffered in the last persecution, Euseb. De Mart. Palest. c. x. The account of the martyrs of Smyrna, first published by Archbishop Usher, makes no mention of Metrodorus. If the zeal of the copist omitted him, it was zeal without knowledge.

clear to be obscured, and too express to be gain-said * : so all that Bayle could do was to remark, that “although the Marcionites agreed
“in certain points with the opinions of the
“Gnostics, yet, as to the point of suffering
“martyrdom, they might have differed from
“them †.”

Indeed, had not the disciples of Marcion differed in some tenets from the Gnostics, it is hard to say for what point of Christian faith they could have suffered martyrdom.

Mosheim attempts to account for it thus :
“The Marcionites held, that violence ought to
“be done to the body, as being composed of
“evil matter, and of the dregs of the malevo-
“lent deity ‡.” This, however, is a vague and fanciful conjecture.

* “Quum igitur fides æstuat, et ecclesia exurit
“de figura rubi, tunc *Gnostici* erumpunt, tunc Va-
“lentiniani proserpunt tunc *omnes martyriorum re-
“fragatores* ebulliunt, calentes et ipsi offendere, fi-
“gere, occidere.” Scorpiace, c. i.

† “Il est bien vrai que Marcion convenoit avec
“les Gnostiques en certaines choses, mais cela n’em-
“pêchoit point que sa secte ne fut différente de la
“leur ; et ainsi, sans un temoignage expres, et sans
“des preuves particulieres, on n’a nul droit de lui
“imputer les sentimens des Gnostiques touchant le
“martyre.” Dictionaire, v. Marcionites, note, E.
viii.

‡ “Vim corpori esse inferendam, machinæ nimi-
“rum ex prava materia fœcibusque maligni Dei

Dr Jortin says, “ That the Marcionites were
 “ put to death, because they acknowledged Je-
 “ sus to be the Son of God, and would not re-
 “ nounce him, and *sacrifice to idols* *.”

The latter part of this conjecture is probable enough ; and it may fitly be said, that the Marcionites, who died for that persuasion, were martyrs to truth. This testimony *unto blood* leaves no doubt of their sincerity ; and it would be presumptuous for us to assert that it was unacceptable to God.

But this proves nothing as to the martyrs of the *fifty* sects of the Gnostics †.

Mr Gibbon concludes his account of the Gnostics with these memorable words : “ Though
 “ they constantly disturbed the peace, and fre-
 “ quently disgraced the name of religion, they
 “ contributed to assist, rather than to retard
 “ the progress of Christianity.”

That men who constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name of Christianity, should have forwarded its progress, is a pro-

“ constructæ.” De Reb. Christ. ante Constant. M. p. 409. note ***.

* Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, ii. 330.

† Dr Middleton [Inquiry, p. 209.] has a curious passage concerning the martyrs amongst heretics. A learned reader will find amusement in comparing the Doctor's paraphrase of Eusebius with the original.

position which, at first sight, seems rather paradoxical.

It is not the general proposition, that "God brings good out of evil," which Mr Gibbon maintains here. *He* must be an incurious observer of the ways of Providence who questions it.

But this supplemental secondary cause of the progress of Christianity is described to be something of a very different nature. "The Gentile converts, whose strongest objections were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged; and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies;" that is, the Gnostics became schoolmasters to bring men to Christ." The road appears somewhat circuitous; but there is no reason to complain of that, since it proved a safe one.

The divine legation of Moses was "foolishness" to the Gentiles, of whom Mr Gibbon speaks; nor could the prophets under the law have been better received by them than Moses was. There were many Christian societies, that is, societies of Gnostics, into which the Gen

tiles could find admission, without being obliged to lay aside their prejudices, or to pay any regard to Moses and the prophets. In those societies, they were insensibly led to yield their full assent to the doctrines of Christianity.

Let us see what they were taught amongst the Gnostics. God did *not* create the world; man did *not* fall from his original excellence; the legation of Moses was *not* divine; *no* such thing as a Jewish theocracy *ever* existed; the religion of Jesus had *no* connection with the Mosaical œconomy; and, to complete all, Christ did *not* die on the cross, and consequently did *not* rise again.

On such foundations, if they may be so called, was Christianity to be established in the minds of the Gentiles: hence their faith became imperceptibly fortified and enlarged; and, in the end, the church received benefit from the triumphs of the Gnostics over moral evidence!

It has been sometimes supposed, that he who has suffered himself to be deluded into the belief of absurdities, may, with more ease, repudiate them, than embrace truth in their stead; and that he who is once made sensible of his having believed too much, is apt to disbelieve every thing, and so exchange credulity for scept-

ticism. But it fared better with those Gentiles who, having been instructed in a system inconsistent even with the first principles of natural religion, were insensibly led to the knowledge and firm belief of the truths of the gospel.

Mr Gibbon illustrates his hypothesis by an historical example. He observes in a note, that “Augustine is a memorable instance of this gradual progress from *reason* to *faith*. He was, during several years, engaged in the Manichæan sect.” i. 551. n. 37.

I confess myself incapable of comprehending the sense of this note. The contrast between *reason* and *faith* may, in some respects, be just : but how can Augustine, by becoming a Christian, after having been infected with the errors of Manes, be said to have made a gradual progress from *reason* to *faith* ? Surely Mr Gibbon could not intend to dignify Manichæism with the name of *reason* !

Let me remark, in passing, that the sermons of Ambrose, and a diligent perusal of the epistles of St Paul, were the means of converting Augustine to the Christian faith *.

* Confess. l. vi. c. 3.—“Arripio Apostolum Paulum — perlegi totum intentissime et cautissime, tunc vero, quantulocunque jam lumine adperso, tanta se mihi philosophiæ facies aperuit,” &c. contra Academicos. l. ii. c. 2. n. 5. 6.

To the account of the Nazarenes and Gnostics, there is added one dissertation under this title, "The Demons considered as the Gods of Antiquity;" and another under this title, "Abhorrence of the Christians for Idolatry." i. 551,—556. But as the sentiments of the Christians in those particulars could neither serve to convert the Jews, nor to gain the approbation of the Heathens, they are foreign to the subject of Mr Gibbon's inquiry; and therefore they shall be passed over at present with this single observation, that what Mr Gibbon says of the universal influence of Paganism, although comprehended within a few pages, has the worth of a volume. It shews, in so strong a light, the difficulties which Christianity had to encounter, that it anticipates the confutation of what he says afterwards of the weakness of Paganism.

CHAPTER II.

THE next secondary cause to which Mr Gibbon ascribes the rapid progress of Christianity, is, “The doctrine of a future life, improved
 “by every additional circumstance which could
 “give weight and efficacy to that important
 “truth.” i. 536. *

From the sequel it appears, that under the notion of a *future life*, Mr Gibbon includes future punishments as well as rewards; and this he pronounces to be a doctrine true and important.

It is a truth implying in it another no less momentous, a PROVIDENCE. On these is religious Theism founded, itself an excellent preparative for the rational belief of Christianity.

Mr Gibbon proceeds to exhibit a view of the opinions of Heathen philosophers concerning the immortality of the soul; and in this part of

* Bishop Watson, Dr Chelsum, and other writers, have so fully considered this part of Mr Gibbon's work, that little else remains for me but to recapitulate their observations.

his work there are many things highly to be applauded. His conclusion, in particular, ought to be kept in remembrance : “ Since, therefore, “ the most sublime efforts of philosophy can “ extend no farther than feebly to point out “ the desire, the hope, or at most the probabili- “ ty of a future state, there is nothing except a “ divine revelation, that can ascertain the exis- “ tence, and describe the condition of the invi- “ sible country, which is destined to receive the “ souls of men after their separation from the “ body *.” i. 558.

There follows an account of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul among the Pagans of Greece and Rome, and among the barbarians ; an account not altogether correct, and, so far as it relates to the Druids, very obscure.

With respect to what is next said of the opinions concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state, which were entertained by the Jews before the gospel æra, it may be doubted whether Mr Gibbon delivers his own judgment or that of others. His picture of the Sadducees, if at all like, appears to be very flattering

* At p. 561. he speaks of “ the doctrine of life “ and immortality, which had been *dictated* by na- “ ture, *approved* by reason, and *received* by super- “ stition.” Between the two passages there is possi- bly nothing more than a seeming contradiction.

and favourable; and as to the Pharisees, we might suspect that, in one particular at least, he goes too far, when he ranks the “doctrine of angels” among “the *new* articles of faith which the Pharisees accepted from the philosophy or religion of the Eastern nations.” But such things, being foreign to the chief purpose of this treatise, shall not be enlarged upon.

We come now to that cause of the rapid progress of Christianity which Mr. Gibbon terms, “The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth.”

It is said, that “when the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind, on condition of adopting the faith, and of observing the precepts of the gospel, it is *no wonder* that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman empire.” i. 561.

As Mr Gibbon is here treating of the secondary causes which accelerated the progress of Christianity, the evidences of the divine mission of Jesus must be laid out of the argument. It would be a great abuse of words, were one to reckon among such *secondary* causes the evi-

dence of this fact, that "the Lord is risen in deed."

Yet, through some unaccountable inadvertency, Mr Gibbon has, at this place, introduced the resurrection of Jesus from the dead : for in no other sense can the following words be understood. "It was still necessary that the doctrine of life and immortality—should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the authority and *example* of Christ."

The resurrection of Jesus being once admitted, the proof of the other miracles said to have been wrought by him, will hardly be brought into controversy ; and then the truth of his testimony, and the sure promises of the Holy Spirit, become manifest. But this leads to the consideration of the *original*, instead of the *secondary* causes of the rapid progress of Christianity : a subject very distant from the avowed purposes of Mr Gibbon's inquiry.

When, therefore, we lay aside the evidences of the divine mission of Jesus, as in treating of secondary causes we must do, *that* will appear most transcendently wonderful, and indeed incredible, which Mr Gibbon carelessly terms *no wonder*.

Is it *no wonder*, that on a promise of eternal happiness, made without authority or credentials by some mean and obscure persons, for

such must the case be supposed, great numbers of every religion, and of every rank throughout the Roman empire, should have laid aside all prejudices, embraced a faith contrary to established opinions, and engaged themselves in a new, difficult, and hazardous course of life?

To believe and to obey, "to adopt the faith" and to observe the precepts of the gospel," is represented as a mighty easy matter. But should we say, that there was nothing to hinder great numbers of Jews from believing in a spiritual deliverance and a spiritual kingdom, and great numbers of Heathens from believing in the resurrection of dead bodies, the world might give us the name of *Theorists*.

Christian immortality is a state which, humanly speaking, the Heathens who lived in the evangelical times could neither understand nor aspire after.

Mr Gibbon proceeds to mention the additional circumstances which gave weight and efficacy to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

"In the primitive church," says he, "the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion, which, however much it may deserve respect for its *usefulness* and *antiquity*, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed,

“ that the end of the world, and the kingdom
“ of heaven were at hand. The near approach
“ of this wonderful event had been predicted
“ by the apostles ; the tradition of it was pre-
“ served by their earliest disciples ; and those
“ who understood, in their literal sense, the dis-
“ courses of Christ himself, were obliged to ex-
“ pect the second and glorious coming of the
“ Son of man in the clouds, before that gene-
“ ration was totally extinguished which had be-
“ held his humble condition on earth.”——

“ The revolution of seventeen centuries has in-
“ structed us not to press too closely the myste-
“ rious language of prophecy and revelation ;
“ but as long as, for wise purposes, this error
“ was permitted to subsist in the church, it
“ was productive of most salutary effects on
“ the faith and practice of Christians, who lived
“ in the awful expectation of that moment when
“ the globe itself, and all the various race of
“ mankind, should tremble at the appearance of
“ their divine Judge.” i. 562.

To all which there is added in a note, “ This
“ expectation was *countenanced* by the 24th
“ chapter of St Matthew, and by the first epi-
“ stle of St Paul to the Thessalonians.”

Amidst all this pomp of Scriptural language,
there is one observation which is hardly Scrip-
tural. An *error in doctrine* is said to have been

permitted for wise purposes, and to have powerfully strengthened the influences of truth.

But several other things occur here that well deserve our attention.

1. Mr Gibbon professes to treat of “the secondary causes of the rapid progress of Christianity;” and yet, instead of shewing *why* the Christians became numerous, he changes the subject, and endeavours to shew *how* an error, supposed to have become prevalent among Christians, had most salutary effects on their faith and practice.

2. It may well be questioned, whether the immediate disciples of our Lord believed that the end of the world was at hand. Granting, for argument’s sake, that, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, the end of the world might be understood as an event to follow presently after the destruction of Jerusalem; yet still our Lord foretold, in language not ambiguous, that great and important events should ensue between *that* destruction and the consummation of all things *. Now we may well suppose, that the first disciples of our Lord would interpret any dark sayings of their Master, in a sense consistent with what he had more clearly delivered to

* Και Ιερουσαλημ εσαι παταμνηνη υπο εθνων, αχρι πληρωθωσι καιροι εθνων. Luke xxi. 24.

them. The mode of interpreting passages to appearance plain, by passages obviously obscure, was reserved for other times.

3. To affirm that this approaching end of the world was universally believed in the apostolical times, is, with all deference to those who have so said, a palpable error : for St Paul knew the contrary to be truth, and openly avowed it in the face of the church. And it may seem singular to assert, that this expectation of the end of the world was *countenanced* by St Paul in his *first* epistle to the Thessalonians ; while he himself, in his *second*, positively declares, that he never said or meant any such thing ; and added these remarkable words, decisive of his opinion, “ Let no man deceive you by any means ; “ for that day shall not come, except there come “ a falling away first, and that man of sin be “ revealed, the son of perdition *.” And what he elsewhere says on the apostacy of latter times †, proceeds on the supposition that the end of the world was not at hand.

* 2 Thess. ii. 3. All this has been fully explained and enforced by many learned men. See, in particular, Hallifax, Sermon v. p. 135. -- 140.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1. It would be lost labour to produce more passages from Scripture to the like purpose. He who can hesitate on this point, after such plain proofs have been laid before him, must remain unconvinced. As Mr Gibbon refers his readers to the

It is true, that some men, in the apostle's own times, misunderstood him; but after he had fully explained himself, it is likely that they did not continue in the wayward humour of still misunderstanding him, and perverting his sentiments *.

4. This ancient and useful error, as Mr Gibbon is pleased to call it, could not have subsist-

“ingenious and elegant discourses” of Bishop Hurd on the prophecies, I must presume that he has read them; yet it is to be feared, that he read them merely as a model of ingenuity and elegance, without attending to their matter and weighty argument. The interpretation of the phrase, “latter times,” and the account of the divisions of that period, *serm. vii.* would, if duly considered, have prevented many mistakes.

* It must be confessed, that in the days of Clemens Romanus, who wrote soon after the death of St Paul, the like error was revived in the church of Corinth, *i. Epist. § 23.* But it appears from that epistle, that the error was not general.

Semler, a professor of divinity at Hall in Germany has not scrupled to affirm, that “St Paul, *wisely, and of set purpose, accommodated himself to the weakness of those men who looked for a speedy arrival of the last day.*” [*Quorum imbecillitati Paulus sapienter et studiose obsecutus est.*] Semler. *Hist. Eccles. Selecta Capita*, p. 22.

It is strange that in the *eighteenth* century, as well as in the *first*, there should have been found men hardy enough to deny to St Paul the common privilege of being allowed to explain his own meaning!

ed long in the church ; for the experience of one generation must have confuted it as effectually as “ a revolution of seventeen centuries ; ” and then it must have lost all its salutary influence on the faith and practice of Christians.

Had the prophecy been so understood, as Mr Gibbon says it was, the Christians might have been led to distrust the promises of our Lord, when they saw that by the mere lapse of time, or *the passing away of that generation*, the prophecy had become incapable of completion ; and this would have retarded, instead of accelerating, the progress of Christianity.

Mr Gibbon says, “ The doctrine—of the “ Millennium was intimately connected with the “ second coming of Christ.” i. 562.

This seems a mistake ; for one main objection to the doctrine of the Millennium arises from the difficulties which occur in accommodating it to what our Lord has said of his second coming.

Mr Gibbon, in describing more particularly the Millenary state, observes, that “ a city was “ erected of gold and precious stones, and a “ supernatural plenty of corn and wine was bestowed on the adjacent territory ; in the free “ enjoyment of whose spontaneous productions “ the happy and benevolent people was never

“ to be restrained by any jealous laws of exclusive property *.”

“ The doctrine of the Millennium——seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it *must* have contributed, in a very considerable degree, to the progress of Christianity.” i. 563.

This, however confidently asserted, is without evidence. The doctrine of the Millennium, in its original form, is supposed to have been exhibit-

* There is added in a note, “ One of the *gross-est* images may be found in Irenæus, [l. v. p. 455.] the disciple of Papias, who had seen the apostle St John.” One might suppose, that something of the nature of a Mahometan paradise was here understood. But the epithet *gross-est* seems to have been borrowed from Dr Middleton, Inquiry, p. 46.; and it only means that the passage, literally taken, contains a *gross* absurdity. Papias indeed describes the supernatural plenty in such hyperbolical expressions, that we can hardly imagine him, silly as he was, to have meant any thing else but an allegory. It may be observed, in passing, that Dr Middleton, while treating of the doctrine of the Millennium, uses his wonted freedom of translation. “ Irenæus,” says he, “ asserts *that* doctrine from the authority of a tradition handed down to him by *all* the old men who had conversed with St John.” The words of Irenæus are, *Quemadmodum presbyteri memin-erunt, qui Johannem discipulum Domini viderunt, audisse se ab eo, &c.* Adv. Hæres, l. v. c. 33. that is, *old men*, not *ALL old men*. The interpolation is palpable, and its tendency obvious.

ed to St John. But men must, by some means or other, have been satisfied of St John's authority to publish that revelation before they gave credit to it; and accordingly we know, what it was reasonable for us to conjecture, that he addressed his account, not to the Gentiles, but to believers.

Besides, the hope of a temporary inheritance could not convert men to a religion which had given them the better promise of "a house eternal in the heavens;" and the being with Christ on earth for a thousand years, was nothing to the being with him in a spiritual state "for ever."

It is more probable, that the figurative expressions in St John came to be interpreted, by Jewish converts, into a resemblance of that temporal kingdom which it was hard for them to renounce altogether, and, by Gentile converts, to be accommodated to the old popular notion of Fortunate islands and Elysian fields *.

One thing Mr Gibbon must admit, that the doctrine of the Millennium, as being founded

* The prophecy in the 20th chapter of the Apocalypse, be its sense what it will, is not accomplished; neither have we any marks which might lead to the expectation of its speedy accomplishment; so, if we inquire at all into the nature of the Millennium, our inquiries ought to be modest and diffident.

on the Apocalypse, could not have contributed at all to the progress of Christianity before the publication of that mysterious book. It follows, that the church passed twice through the flames of persecution, and grew mighty by her trials and sufferings, without the aid of this secondary cause.

What follows is inaccurately expressed, and conveys a meaning very different, it may be presumed, from the intention of the author. "But
"when the edifice of the church was almost
"completed, the temporary support was laid
"aside, the doctrine of Christ's reign upon
"earth was, at first, treated as a profound alle-
"gory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful
"and useless opinion, and was at length reject-
"ed as the absurd invention of heresy and fa-
"naticism." i. 563.

From this detail we might be led to suppose, that the principal teachers in the Christian church concurred in using the doctrine of the Millennium, as a temporary prop to the fabric of religion, which they were employed in building, and that they threw it down whenever it became useless; yet surely Mr Gibbon did not mean this, for he knew that the doctrine of the Millennium, as described by himself, was disliked by many eminent and learned persons, and that, instead of ministering consolation, it did,

from the beginning, produce unprofitable contentions *.

He concludes this part of his disquisitions with the following words : “ A mysterious prophecy, which still forms a part of the sacred canon, but which was thought to favour the exploded sentiment, has very narrowly escaped the proscription of the church.” i. 563.

After the labour bestowed by men of superior literature in defending the authority of the Apocalypse, it would ill become me to say much on the subject †.

* Ὡς καὶ σχίσματα καὶ ἀποστασίας ὅλων ἐκκλησιῶν γε-
γονέναι, are the emphatical words of Dionysius of Alexandria, Euseb. Hist. Eccles. vii. 24. He complains that many persons in his time had become so fond of a book which they could not understand, as to neglect the study of the gospels and epistles.

† Semler thus speaks of the Apocalypse : “ Apocalypsis dubiæ originis, et infirmiorum in gratiam, *picta magis quam scripta*, varias sententias inde a primo tempore experta est. Christiani ex Judæis non respuerunt, sed plerique ea parum usi sunt, non pauci omnino rejecerunt ; postea, cum Tychonius, [sæc. v.] spiritualem expositionem præiverat, a plerisque recepta fuit ; sic tamen, ut de historica hujus libri origine et fide nondum omnino ita, uti de aliis, nobis constat ; sed res ad arbitrium et conscientiam lectorum hodie adhuc redeat.” Semleri Hist. Eccles. Selecta Capita, p. 18.

It is hard to say, whether the temerity or the strange inaccuracy of such observations be most remarkable. The author seems to think that, among

But the history of the "hair-breadth 'scapes" of the Apocalypse is too singular to be dismissed without a few remarks ; and perhaps it may be in my power to add something to that general argument which is, or at least ought to be familiar to all who profess any knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquities.

" In the council of Laodicea, about the year 360, the Apocalypse was tacitly excluded from " the sacred canon *by the same churches of Asia* " *to which it is addressed,*" note (67.) *

the primitive Christians, there was a difference of opinion as to the authority of the Apocalypse, because that work is " rather painted than written ;" [*picta magis quam scripta*] ; that is, because it is composed in figurative, rather than in historical language. But the learned professor did not recollect, that, were this a reason for inducing the primitive Christians to doubt of the authority of the Apocalypse, a like reason ought to have induced Jews as well as Christians, to doubt of the authority of most prophecies in the Old Testament, and particularly of the books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Hosea ; for *they* also are composed " in figurative, rather than in historical language." Semler seems to suppose, that they were the converted Jews who, in the early ages, acknowledged the authority of the "Apocalypse ; but Cyprian, neither an Hebrew, nor the son of an Hebrew, has quoted *seventy-eight* verses of the Apocalypse, being almost the *fifth* part of that book.

* This observation seems to have been borrowed from Mill. Prolegomena, xxvii. " Integrum insuper Concilium Episcoporum Asiaticorum in ipsa

If the letter to the seven churches of Asia had been truly addressed to them by the apostle St John, its authority would have been beyond just doubt.

Let us see the evidence produced for proving that the letter was not addressed to them by St John.

After an interval of more than *two hundred and seventy years*, the bishops of Asia thought fit to deny that their predecessors ever received such a letter, and therefore they tacitly excluded it from the sacred canon.

They did not however recollect, that copies of that letter had been circulated at a very early period throughout the Christian church, and that the copies had become numerous * ; that Papias, the contemporary of St John, spake of it ; that Justin Martyr, almost his contemporary,

“ urbe Laodicea, cui septima Epistola Apocalypseos
“ scripta erat, congregatum eam itidem canone ex-
“ clusit.”

* It is plain, that, even in the times of Irenæus, there existed many copies of the Apocalypse, some more ancient, and others of a more recent date ; some of less, and others of greater authority : for he quotes a passage from it, of which there occurred various readings, and he determines for that reading which was to be found “ in all good and ancient copies ;” [ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς σπουδαίαις καὶ ἀρχαίοις ἀντιγραφοῖς.] Adv. Hæres, l. 5. c. 30. The original words are preserved by Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 8.

quoted it; that it was the subject of a treatise written by Melito, bishop of Sardis, in the early part of the second century *; that Irenæus pro-

* Nothing remains of Melito's tract, besides its title, which Eusebius has preserved. Hist. Eccles. iv. 26.

The author of "a discourse, historical and critical, on the Revelations," printed in 1730, seems to doubt whether Melito wrote *on* the Apocalypse, or *against* it?

It would have been a circumstance of considerable moment, had Melito questioned the authenticity and authority of the Apocalypse.

He was bishop of Sardis in the second century, and it is held, that he drew up his Apology for the Christians in the year 167 after the birth of Christ. If Valesius be right in his interpretation of the words of Eusebius, that Apology was the last of the numerous treatises which Melito published. Eusebius, after having enumerated the others, says, *ἐπι πασι καὶ τὸ πρὸς Ἀντωνινὸν βιβλίδιον*. The passage is thus rendered by Valesius: "*Postremus omnium est libellus ad Imperatorem Antoninum.*" If it was the last of his works, we might conclude him to have been well advanced in years when he composed it; and this would make him almost the contemporary of St John, who died about the end of the first century. But the words, *ἐπι πασι*, may imply "above all," as well as, "after all;" and they may respect the merit and celebrity of the performance, independent of the time at which it was composed.

In either view, the date of the Apology being once fixed to the year 167, it follows, that Melito must have been acquainted with many bishops, the contemporaries and companions of St John, and must

duced about twelve passages from it ; and, not to multiply authorities, that Clemens Alex-

have known what their opinion was concerning the authenticity and authority of the Apocalypse.

Of Melito, bishop of Sardis, and Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, Eusebius thus speaks : “ The following is a catalogue of such of their works as have come to my knowledge. Of Melito, *the two of Easter*, [literally, *the of Easter, two*] ; and “ the [treatises] *of the conduct of life*, and *of the prophets* ; the [discourse] *of the church*.” And, after having mentioned several others, he adds, “ and “ the [treatises] *of the Devil*, and *of the Apocalypse of John*.” [τετων εἰς ἡμῖν γενησιν ἀφικται τα υπο-
τηταμῖνα. Μελιτωνος, τα περι τε Πασχα δυο, και τα
περι πολιτειας και προφητων, και ο περι εκκλησιας. —
Και τα περι τε διαβολα, και της αποκαλυψεως Ἰωαννης.]

This literal translation is made for the use of the unlearned reader, and for the better enabling him to understand the import of what will be mentioned in the sequel. The plural *τα* is rendered “ the treatises,” and the singular, *ο*, “ the discourse ;” because, in the former case, *βιβλια*, or something synonymous is implied, and in the latter, *λογος*, or the like ; *πολιτεια*, which, in classical authors, means “ civil regimen,” is frequently used by the ancient Christian writers for “ demeanour or conduct in life,” and it is so rendered here. Let us now see in what sense the author of “ the historical and critical discourse” chuses to understand Eusebius. He says, that “ amongst the tracts of Melito, there was *one* “ entitled, *of the devil of the Revelations*, as Eusebius relates.”

A translation so extravagantly erroneous might have been ascribed to ignorance of the Greek language, for men *with small Greek* sometimes cavil at

andrinus appealed to it upwards of thirty times*.

the canon of the New Testament, were it not that the Latin version of Valesius is sufficiently plain. "Ad hæc de diabolo *et* de Revelatione Johannis."

The same critic who found "the devil of the Revelations" in Eusebius, could not find the word John there. *That* would at least have proved, that a bishop of Sardis, in the second century, made no doubt of the Apocalypse having been published by *one* John.

There is no reason for supposing, that in the same tract Melito treated "of the devil" and "of the Apocalypse;" we might as well suppose, that what he had to offer concerning "the conduct of life" and "the prophets," subjects totally different, were comprehended under the same tract.

This is not said to serve an hypothesis, because, had the title of Melito's treatise been such as the critic wished, there would have been no more ground for imagining that he doubted the authenticity of the Apocalypse, than that he doubted the existence of the devil.

Besides, an additional argument would have thence arisen for proving that Melito acknowledged the authenticity of the Apocalypse. Had he not done so, he never would have written a dissertation on the sense of the word "devil," Revel. xii. 9. xx. 2. which however the critic must have supposed.

Mr Gibbon will excuse the impropriety of introducing into an examination of his work, these strictures on a writer who had not even the vulgar art of veiling bad purposes in specious language.

* It is remarkable, that the Christians of Vienne, and Lyons of Gaul, in their letter "to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia," describing the

And it is to be presumed, that they did not know that the Christian authors who wrote before the middle of the fourth century had transfused into their works almost every paragraph, and even sentence of the Apocalypse.

Had they recollected or known these circumstances, it would have been more judicious and more modest for them to have asked the concurrence of the Christian world, before they proceeded to what Mr Gibbon imputes to them.

Hitherto the hypothesis has been admitted, “that the same churches of Asia to which the “Apocalypse was addressed, did tacitly exclude “it from the sacred canon.”

But this will be thought very doubtful, when

persecution under M. Antoninus, make no fewer than *six* references to the Apocalypse, whereas they make no more than *ten* references to *all* the other Scriptures of the New Testament. See Remains of Christian Antiquity, i. 210. In one place of that letter it is said, “that *the Scripture* might be fulfilled, *be* “*that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and be that* “*is righteous, let him be righteous still.*” [*ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῇ, ὁ ἀνομος ἀνομιησάτω ἐτι καὶ ὁ δίκαιος δικαιοσύνην ἐτι.*] Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 1. This passage is to be found in Revel. xxii. 11. and no where else. Hence we may conclude, that the Christians of Gaul, in that early age, admitted the authority of the Apocalypse, and supposed that their brethren of the Asiatic churches admitted it likewise.

the nature of the council of Laodicea, and the purport of its 60th canon, to which Mr Gibbon alludes, are considered.

A provincial council was assembled in the fourth century at Laodicea, in Phrygia, probably between the year 370 and 380. The meeting was an obscure one ; and as nothing passed at it which in those days was held to be of importance to the Christian world, its precise æra has not been ascertained.

The canons made in that council are lost ; but there is extant a summary of them in Greek, with two versions of it, the one by Isidorus, surnamed *Mercator* ; and the other by Dionysius, surnamed *Exiguus*.

In the title of this summary, the council is thus described : “ The Holy Synod gathered
“ together at Laodicea in *Phrygia Pacatiana*, out
“ of various jurisdictions of [the diocese] *Asi-*
“ *ana* *.”

It was necessary to make this observation on the title †, because learned men, not supposing

* Ἡ ἁγία Σύνοδος ἡ κατὰ Λαοδικείαν τῆς Φρυγίας Πακατιανῆς συγκροτηθεῖσα ἐκ διαφορῶν ἐπαρχιῶν τῆς Ἀσίας.
Harduin. Concil. i. 782.

† The title itself seems to be in some measure corrupted ; for, if I mistake not, Laodicea on the river Lycus, the place here meant, was situated in Phrygia Salutaris, and not in Phrygia Pacatiana.

the matter to be of any consequence, have confided in the justness of the versions made by Isidorus and Dionysius.

Isidorus translates *ἐκ διαφόρων παρχιῶν τῆς Ἀσιανῆς*, “Ex diversis regionibus Asiæ;” and Dionysius, “Ex diversis provinciis *Asiae* ;” and hence the title has been supposed to contain the word *Asia*, and its sense has been misunderstood.

The word *Asiana* implies *diæcesis Asiana*, a tract of country, governed by an officer termed *Vicarius Asianæ diæceseos*. Under that diocese, *Asia Major*, comprehending the cities of Ephesus and Smyrna, was not accounted; and accordingly the bishops of those cities appeared at the general council of Nice as from *Asia Major**, and not from the diocese *Asiana*. It follows, that *two* at least of the *seven* churches, and these by far the most eminent, neither had, nor could have had, any concern in the deliberations of the council of Laodicea; and that *they* did not even “tacitly exclude the Apocalypse from the sacred canon.”

It seems probable, that the council at Laodicea was composed of the Phrygian bishops, and of some few bishops from other districts of the diocese *Asiana*.

* Menophantus, bishop of Ephesus, and Euty-chius, bishop of Smyrna.

Isidorus relates, that *twenty-two* bishops assembled at that council ; at the council of Nice *forty-two* bishops, from the diocese *Asiana*, assembled. This shews, not only that the number of bishops at the council of Laodicea was small, but also that a much larger number might have been assembled there, if the bishops of the diocese *Asiana** had all taken their seats.

And now we see that we should form a very wrong estimate of the council of Laodicea, were we to consider it as the representative of all the churches of Asia.

Having thus seen what was the nature of that council, let us examine what it did in relation to the Apocalypse.

By its 59th canon, the council enacted,
 “ That psalms, the composition of private persons, and uncanonical books, should not be
 “ rehearsed in church ; but that the canonical
 “ books alone of the Old and New Testament
 “ should be so rehearsed †.”

In the 60th canon, there is a list of the books

* I presume that the reader will observe, that the word *diocese* is used for a civil distribution of territories in the lower empire.

† Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἰδιωτικὰς ψαλμοὺς λεγέσθαι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ οὐδὲ ἀκανονιστὰ βιβλία, ἀλλὰ μόνον τὰ κανονικὰ τῆς καινῆς καὶ παλαιᾶς διαθήκης. No other word but *rehearsed* occurs for λεγέσθαι.

which ought to be read, [αναγινωσκεσθαι]. That list contains Baruch, with *the epistle*, supposed to be the 6th chapter of Baruch ; but it does not contain the Apocalypse. This seems to be a fair state of the fact.

Here it is to be observed, that the version by Dionysius Exiguus does not contain the 60th canon ; and hence we may conclude, that in the Greek summary which he translated, no such canon was to be found. Such being the case, one may doubt of its authenticity. Isidorus Mercator, who lived in a later age than Dionysius Exiguus *, might have translated it from a copy which did not exist when Dionysius made his version.

Besides, the version of Isidorus says more than what is in the Greek summary. Its words are, "What books ought to be read †," [ὅσα δεῖ βιβλία αναγινωσκεσθαι], but the version adds, "and
"to be received as authoritative," [et in auctoritatem recipi]. This changes the sense altoge-

* Dionysius lived in the 6th century. He is remarkable for having, in his *Cyclus Paschalis*, introduced the computation of time from the birth of Christ. His æra begins with what he calls the year 533. Isidorus lived in the eighth century.

† "To be read," is used as being the most literal translation ; but it is admitted on all hands, that the word means "to be publicly read in churches."

ther : for the bishops at Laodicea might have had prudential reasons for not allowing the Apocalypse to be read in churches *, and yet might have entertained no suspicion as to its genuineness and authority †. This may be the import of the 60th canon, as it is in the Greek; but the version of Isidorus implies more.

The result of the whole is, that if the 60th canon of the council at Laodicea be authentic,

* The church of England allows no more than seven chapters of the Apocalypse to be publicly read, [ch. i. iv. vii. xii. xiv. xix. xxii.] and yet she accounts the whole book to be canonical; and so she might have accounted it, although those *seven* chapters had been omitted in the public reading, as well as the other *fifteen*. This illustration is borrowed from Mr Milner's tract against Mr Gibbon, p. 26.

† If, as is most likely, the bishop of Laodicea bore sway in the council, we may see a reason why he should have wished to exclude a *certain* part of the Apocalypse from the public reading. As, in some churches, the praise bestowed on them at a particular season has been arrogated to succeeding generations, so the censure on the church at Laodicea, c. iii. 14. &c. might have been understood to affect posterity in after ages. Here let it be observed in passing, that Laodicea was overthrown by an earthquake, A. U. C. 813; and that the Neronian persecution began A. U. C. 817.; it is not probable that St John would have addressed the Laodiceans, as he does at ver. 17. had their city been ruined about *five* years before. This may contribute to support the very ancient tradition, that the Apocalypse was published under the persecution by Domitian.

twenty-two bishops of Asia, towards the end of the fourth century, made no mention of the Apocalypse while they were enumerating the books to be read in churches. Thus the Apocalypse did not at that time make so "narrow an escape from the proscription of the church," as Mr Gibbon imagines *.

But it seems "that the *sentence* of the bishops "at Laodicea had been *ratified* by the greater "number of Christians" in the days of Sulpicius Severus †.

The importance of the testimony of Sulpicius Severus depends on the meaning of the word *plerique*, which he uses; and the question is, whether, in the passage alluded to, it implies *many* or *most*.

After having positively asserted that St John the apostle wrote the Apocalypse during his banishment to Patmos, and under the reign of Do-

* In justice to Mr Gibbon, it must be observed, that what he says as to the rejection of the Apocalypse by the churches of Asia, is merely an improvement on Mill's Prolegomena. Mill may have been an able collator of manuscripts, but he was not possessed of any critical acumen; witness his defence of the authenticity of the 2d epistle of St Peter, in which his prime argument is, that if the epistle was not written by that saint, it must have been written by an impostor.

† About the beginning of the fifth century.

mitian, he adds, “ which book indeed, either
“ foolishly or impiously, is not received by *many*
[or by *most*] men *.”

Mr Davis† has collected examples sufficient for proving, to the satisfaction of any impartial reader, that Sulpicius Severus frequently uses the word *plerique* in the sense of *several* or *many*; and that he so uses it when the context positively excludes the other interpretation of *most*. ‡

Besides, Sulpicius Severus could never have meant to say, that *the greater number* of Christians at large did not receive the Apocalypse as a book of authority. In his days, the Christians of the West and of the South received it without hesitation; and, had he said the contrary, we must have admitted that he opposed him-

* “ Qui quidem a plerisque, aut stulte aut impie, non recipitur.” Hist. Eccles. ii. 45.

† Reply to Mr Gibbon’s Vindication, p. 71.

‡ For example, Sulpicius says, “ Hujus [Cham] filius, Chus nomine, Nembrod gigantem genuit: a quo Babylon civitas constructa traditur. *Pleraque* etiam oppida ea tempestate condita memorantur.” Sac. Hist. l. 1. p. 8. edit. Elz.—“ Media hyeme, quæ solito asperior inhorruerat, adeo, ut *plerosque* vis algoris extingueret,” Vita Martin. c. ii. p. 218.—Sulpicius never could mean, that *most* cities were founded in the days of Nimrod, or that, during the hard winter which he describes, the *greater* part of men died of excessive cold.

self to historical truth, either with the view of serving some favourite hypothesis, or from caprice. Love for a favourite hypothesis, and the impulse of caprice, may have perverted the judgment of abler men than Sulpicius Severus; but these causes, however forcible, could scarcely have had the effect of making him say, that the greater number of Christians differed from his *own* opinion.

To all this let me add, that a person who had listed himself in a depressed party, might have been apt to say, that *most* men, or *the multitude*, were foolish or impious, when they favoured opinions inconsistent with his own. But Sulpicius Severus stood not in that predicament. He thought of the Apocalypse as the Italian and African churches, and as many other churches did; and it is hardly possible that he should have included them under a pitiful minority; this, however, he must have done, had he meant to say that *most men* would not receive the Apocalypse.

One important objection to the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon concerning the Apocalypse is stated by himself: for he thus speaks, “from what causes is the Apocalypse so generally received by the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant churches?”

That all Christian churches, however widely

and irreconcilably they may differ in opinion as to other matters, should with one voice assert the authority of the Apocalypse, is a remarkable circumstance, and hardly consistent with the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon; and yet he has attempted to account for this unanimity, and to show that it affords no evidence for proving the Apocalypse to be authentic *.

1. "The Greeks," says he, "were *subdued* by the authority of an impostor, who, in the sixth century, assumed the character of Dionysius the Areopagite †."

But there is no evidence of this; and it is much more probable that an impostor quoted the book because it had already obtained credit, than that the book obtained credit, because it had been quoted by him. This, of itself, seems sufficient to outweigh an unvouched assertion to the contrary.

* In such a case, Horace, as a satyrist, might have said, "*Nil Scriptoribus arduum.*"

† It is needless to inquire from what source Mr Gibbon derived this information. Mr Davis [Reply, p. 73.] supposes that the following passage from Abauzit is alluded to. "L'Apocalypse s'introduisit ainsi peu a peu, sur tout depuis que le faux Denys Areopagite, qui la mettoit au rang des livres sacres, commençoit a passer chez les Grecs pour le veritable Denys. S. Maxime, dans le septieme siecle, fit fort valoir cet auteur." Discours Historique sur l'Apocalypse, p. 315.

In the earlier part of the second century, Melito bishop of Sardis wrote a treatise on the Revelation of St John; and in the fifth century, Andrew bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, wrote commentaries on that mysterious book. Had those bishops doubted of its authenticity, they would not have bestowed their labour in the composing of such works. It is, however, taken for granted by Mr Gibbon, that their authority had no influence over the Greeks.

Origen and Clemens Alexandrinus, men of infinite reading, admitted the authenticity of the Apocalypse, just as the Greek and Roman churches and the churches of the Reformation do at this day. Chrysostom, not only a learned, but also a very fashionable preacher, and many others of eminent note in the Eastern church, were of the like opinion. To the same purpose are the testimonies, formerly quoted, of Papias, Justin M. and Irenæus; and of the Christians of Vienne and Lyons, in the second century. Yet, it seems, the Greeks resisted all evidence, and persevered in their unbelief, until, at length, they were subdued by a knavish Platonic visionary! *

* From among the testimonies for the authenticity of the Apocalypse, *that* of the third council of Carthage, Can. xlvii. [an. 397.] is purposely omitted; and indeed it appears singular, that Protestants

2. “A just apprehension that the Grammarians might become more important than the Theologians, engaged the council of Trent to fix the seal of their infallibility on all the books of Scripture contained in the Latin Vulgate, in the number of which the Apocalypse was fortunately included.”

It may well be supposed, that the Theologians wished to have the Latin Vulgate held as the only *text of authority* [*pro authentica.*] For had more latitude been given, and the public use of Hebrew and Greek copies of the Scriptures allowed, the grammarians, that is, critics

should have had recourse to a canon which, together with the Apocalypse, receives the books of Tobit and Judith as authentic.

It may not be improper to observe, that Pope Celestin quotes Revelations xxii. 18, 19. in his letter to Nestorius, read in the council of Ephesus, an. 430. *τις ποποτε εκ αξιος τε αναθεματιθηναι εκριθη, η αφιρων τε, η προστιθεις τη πιστει; τα γαρ μεστωσ και φανερωσ παραδοθεντα ημιν παρα των αποστολων, ετε προσθηκην ετε μειωτιν επιδεχεται. ανεγνωμεν γαρ EN TAIS BIBΛOIS ημων, μητε προστιθεναι δειν μητε αφαιρειν. μεγιστη γαρ και τον προστιθεντα και τον αφαιροντα τιμαρια δεσμευι.* Harduin. Concilia. i. 1304.—Pope Celestine was in such favour with the council of Ephesus, that the fathers joined in this acclamation: “Thanks to Celestine, to the new Paul—to the guardian of the faith.” [*ΝΕΩ ΠΑΥΛΩ—τω φυλακι της πιστεως. ib. 1471.*] This second Paul asserted the authority of the Apocalypse.

and philologists, would, by their improved versions, have disturbed the profound quiet of the church. Against this inconveniency the council provided by *one* decree; it was by *another* decree that the council ascertained the sacred canon, and left that place to the Apocalypse which it had possessed for so many ages.

3. “The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the see of Rome, inspired the Protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally.”

This passage in Mr Gibbon’s work has given great offence, and, no doubt, it is oddly expressed. For, not to mention other objections, it seems to imply, that the Protestants might have rejected the Apocalypse and expelled it from the sacred canon, and that they would have done so, had they judged that measure expedient.

Hence we might be led to suppose, that they, who at the æra of the Reformation departed from the church of Rome, acted on a concerted plan. But it is the very reverse of this, as all men know, which their enemies object to them.

The truth is, that the Protestants in general admitted the authority of the Apocalypse just as it had been admitted for ages throughout the Christian world, and that they interpreted cer-

tain memorable passages in it just as they had been interpreted by eminent persons of the church of Rome, when disgusted with the excesses, or shocked at the enormities of Papal dominion.

Had the Protestants, in contradiction to evidence, suffered themselves to be guided by their chief leaders, Luther and Calvin, they would not have shewn any eagerness to seize “the advantage of turning the prophecies of that “mysterious book against the see of Rome.”

Luther at first rejected the authority of the Apocalypse, which the church of Rome herself acknowledged *.

* There are different prefaces to the Apocalypse prefixed to different editions of Luther’s translation of the Bible.

The editions of Luther’s translation of the Bible which contain his original preface to the Apocalypse, are not to be found in Britain; at least they have been searched for without success, as well in the Bodleian Library as in the British Museum.

By the favour of a worthy and eminent person, whom I am not at liberty to name, I have obtained from the Divinity Professor at Helmstadt the following accurate version of what Luther says of the Apocalypse in his first edition, 1522.

Prefatio Lutheri in Apocalypsin Johannis.

Anno 1522.

“De hoc libro pariter suum cuique salvum relinquo iudicium, nec meam cuique sententiam aut opi-

Afterwards, indeed, he seems to have inclined more to the received opinion : But still it is

nionem obtrudere cupio. Tantum declaro quid mihi videatur. Equidem plura desidero, cur neque Apostolicum censeam, neque Propheticum. Primum, idque maximum, dubium inde oritur, quod Apostoli non visis inhærere, sed perspicuis ac disertis verbis vaticinari solent, quemadmodum etiam Petrus, Paulus, Christus in evangelio ; atque ita munus apostolicum decebat, perspicue et citra imagines aut visa, de Christo et gestis ejus loqui.

Præterea, nemo Prophetarum Veteris, nedum Novi Testamenti, ita totus est in visis atque imaginibus, ut vix possim quin quarto libro Esræ illum similem, statuas, neque omnino vestigium inspirationis sanctioris reperiam.

Accedit, quod, ut mihi quidem videtur, nimium suo libro arrogat, illumque enixius, quam in alio ullo libro ex numero sanctorum (qui multo majoris erant momenti) factum est, commendat, subjuncta comminatione, *qui quidquam ademerit de eo, de illo etiam Deum ademurum esse*, &c. contra ea, beatos fore, qui contenta observarint ; quamvis nemo quid contineat scire, nedum observare, possit, et perinde sit, ac si totum non haberemus, multique alii sint libri observandi longe præstantiores.

Fuerunt etiam ex patribus olim multi, qui librum hunc rejicerent ; et quanquam Hieronymus in eo commendando verbosior est, illumque, ultra omnem prædicationem, sublimem esse, immo tot mysteria continere quam verba, affirmat, fidem tamen dicto facere non potuit, et aliis quoque locis in laudando liberalior esse solet.

Denique cuilibet ita licebit de hoc libro judicare, quemadmodum animo se ferri sentiet. Meus quidem animus parum cum isthoc libro congruit ; mihi que

plain, from the style of his later prefaces, and from the apologies made for him by his follow-

ad tanti non faciendum hæc ratio sufficit, quod nec doceri, nec agnosci in eo videam Christum ; in quo tamen primæ cernuntur partes Apostoli, quemadmodum, Act. i. "*Testes mei estote,*" postulat. Itaque eos teneo libros, qui mihi Christum exhibent, clare ac pure spectandum."

The very same words occur in the edition 1524. But in the edition 1535, the strong passages are omitted, and the book is acknowledged to be divine, with some doubt, however, about its author, and with the offer of an hypothesis by which the visions might be interpreted.

In a later edition he thus speaks: "The third kind of prophecy is that which foretels by bare images and figures without interpretation, like this book of the Apocalypse. So long as such prophecy receives no certain interpretation, it is a hidden and dumb prophecy, unprofitable and unfruitful to Christians. And thus it has hitherto fared with this book. Many indeed have attempted to explain it, but still they have advanced nothing certain ; and they have rather hatched out of their own fancies a variety of things inept and incongruous. On account of such uncertain interpretations and hidden senses, I have hitherto left it untouched ; and this the more especially, because some of the ancient fathers thought it was not written by John the apostle. See Euseb. Hist. Eccles. iii. 25. *For my part, I leave the matter thus doubtful, that no one may be hindered to believe the book to be the work of St John, or to do as he chooses.*"

In another preface to the same book, Luther speaks more favourably of it, but still in general

ers *, that Luther never had an *uncommon veneration for the mysterious book*.

The other great reformer, Calvin, had no doubts as to the authority of the Apocalypse, yet he cautiously abstained from writing any commentaries on it. Nay more, although in his Institute he laboured to prove that the Pope, or rather Papal dominion, was *Antichrist*, yet he produced no passage from the Apocalypse as tending to support that favourite tenet †.

terms ; and he concludes thus : “ If the Scriptures ought, always to be read with humility, modesty, and reverence, such a frame of mind is peculiarly requisite for the perusal of this book, that we may not sink into an abyss of vile dreams and fancies, as many inquisitive men have lately done, who imagine that they have searched out all those secrets which God hath reserved to himself, until he shall gradually disclose their meaning, so far as his own glory and our welfare require.” These versions have been communicated to me by a respectable friend, on whose skill in the German language I can rely.

* “ *Lutherum quod attinet, quicquid olim scripserit in veteri præfatione, in ea sane quæ hodie in codicibus legitur nihil de Apocalypsi asserit aliud, quam in dubio se relinquere utrum sit Joannis apostoli, quod nonnulli ex vetustioribus patribus id inficiati sint, nihil tamen hoc ipso se prejudicari velle aliis.*” Chr. Kortholt. de canon. Script. sanct. c. 18.

† “ Quant S. Jean. est repris par l’ange, de ce

We may now conclude, from the evidence produced, that neither Luther nor Calvin ever used *this ally against the see of Rome*; and therefore Mr Gibbon will allow us to add some words to his proposition, and then it will run thus: "The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the see of Rome, *was rejected or disregarded by Luther and Calvin, the chief leaders amongst the Protestants*; but it inspired the other Protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally."

Mr Gibbon must admit the fairness of this addition, for the truth of it has been proved; and yet the addition does so much impair his intended inference, that, had he been aware of the fact, he would, I persuade myself, have omitted this too hasty note.

The short matter is this: the Protestants in general, notwithstanding the doubts and reserve of their leaders, admitted the authority of the Apocalypse, as they found it fully and unambi-

qu'il s'estoit agenouille devant lui," &c. Apocalypse, xix. 10. Inst. l. i. c. 12. §. 3.

"St Jean. dit que tous les saints ont lave leurs robes au sang de l'Agneau." Apoc. vii. 14. Inst. l. iii. c. 5. §. 2.

"L'Ecriture nous donne bien une meilleure consolation, en prononçant que ceux qui sont morts en nostre Seigneur sont bien heureux." Apoc. xiv. 13. Inst. l. iii. c. 5. §. 10.

guously established ; and it would have been the height of absurdity for them to have attempted to expel from the sacred canon, a book, whose prophecies seemed to justify their secession from the church of Rome *.

* Perhaps Mr Gibbon meant to say no more than what is here affirmed. If so, he has expressed himself in words ill-chosen, and of dubious interpretation. If we hold the Apocalypse to be, in plain language, an undigested fiction, it remains for Mr Gibbon, an avowed Protestant, to explain how it should have become *an useful ally* to the Protestant cause.

CHAPTER III.

AMONGST the secondary causes of the rapid progress of Christianity, Mr Gibbon reckons “the miraculous powers of the primitive church;” and he observes, “that the supernatural gifts—ascribed to the Christians, must have conduced to their own comfort, and very frequently to the conviction of Infidels.” i. 567.

Here the reality of such supernatural gifts seems supposed; and yet, unless the tendency of Mr Gibbon’s discourse be misunderstood, their reality is questioned.

He admits the truth of the miracles reported to have been wrought in the apostolical times, i. 570. 571.; and there is no doubt amongst Christians, that the rapid progress of their religion was partly owing to those miracles.

Before the death of St Paul, the Christians had become very numerous; and it is impossible for any candid inquirer to deny, that they became still more numerous before the death of

St John * ; and thus, during the æra of undisputed miracles, Christianity made a rapid, and indeed an astonishing progress. The moral evidence arising from this must have tended to the conversion of infidels at that time, in like manner as it now tends to confirm the faith of believers.

Here Mr Gibbon might have stopped : But he proceeds through all the succeeding ages of the church, and unfortunately engages himself and his readers in a labyrinth of controversy.

I do not pretend to examine at large every thing that Mr Gibbon has said or surmised on the subject of *miraculous powers* ; some particulars, however, shall be touched.

Mr Gibbon says, That “ the Christian church, “ from the time of the Apostles and their first “ disciples, has claimed an *uninterrupted suc- “ cession of miraculous powers ;*” and, amongst

* We learn this, not merely from “ the scanty and “ suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history,” as Mr Gibbon chuses to speak, i. 535. but from two Heathen writers of great name. The well-known passages in Tacitus and Pliny the Younger, bear testimony to the amazing progress of the Christian religion ; in particular, we learn from Pliny, that not *ten* years after the death of St John, the multitude of Christians in Bythinia, a province very remote as well from Judea as from the capital, was exceedingly great.

them, he particularly mentions "the power of raising the dead."

We can hardly reconcile this observation to the truth of history.

Under the phrase of "Christian church," Mr Gibbon undoubtedly comprehends "the churches of the Reformation;" and *that* part of his proposition comes now to be considered.

It will be difficult to show that the churches of the Reformation have claimed the power of raising the "dead," and no less difficult to reconcile what Mr Gibbon says here, of such a power being claimed by them, with the remark which immediately follows, in these words "of the primitive miracles, the power of exorcising is the *only one* which has been assumed by Protestants*."

Are we to interpret his general proposition thus: "That, ever since the days of the Apostles and the first disciples, the power of raising the dead, and the other miraculous powers

* It is possible that, by "Protestants," Mr Gibbon meant "individuals in the Protestant churches;" and yet, if the word be taken in that sense, it will not be easy to discern the tendency of the remark: for then he might have said, and with no less reason, that the Protestants assumed the power of raising the dead; and he might have proved this from the celebrated story of the French prophets in the reign of Q. Anne.

“ mentioned by Mr Gibbon, have been claimed,
“ some in one age, and some in another, either
“ by the Christian church, or by individuals of
“ that great body ?”

This interpretation, though vague and void of consequence, seems the only one that can reconcile Mr Gibbon to himself, and to the truth of history.

Here let it be observed, in passing, that at p. 567. Mr Gibbon asserts, That “ the Christian church has claimed an *uninterrupted* succession of power to raise the dead ;” while, at p. 569. he bestows much good criticism to prove, that Theophilus Bishop of Antioch, towards the close of the second century, knew not of any such power being claimed at that time in the Christian church.

Surely Mr Gibbon does not look for our assent to such contradictory propositions as these, that in the second century, the Christian church claimed a power to raise the dead, and yet that the Bishop of one of the most eminent sees knew nothing of such a claim.

Having premised this much, let us examine the noted passages in Irenæus, to which Mr Gibbon, after the example of Dr Middleton, alludes *.

* Inquiry, p. 12.

His words are : “ But the miraculous cure of
 “ diseases of the most inveterate and even preter-
 “ natural kind, can no longer occasion any sur-
 “ prise, when we recollect that, in the days of
 “ Irenæus, about the end of the second century,
 “ the resurrection of the dead was very far
 “ from being esteemed an uncommon event ;
 “ that the miracle was frequently performed,
 “ on necessary occasions, by great fasting, and
 “ the joint supplication of the church of the
 “ place ; and that the persons thus restored to
 “ their prayers had lived afterwards amongst
 “ them many years. Irenæus, *adv. hæres.* l. ii.
 “ c. 56. 57. ; l. v. c. 6 *.”

As to the passages from Irenæus, Dr Middleton resolutely and fairly spake out his sentiments, and he declared his strong suspicions of fraud and collusion. † This plain dealing is laudable.

It seems that the words of Irenæus have been misunderstood by some persons who wished well to Christianity, and by others of more equivocal character, and that he does not speak of any resuscitation of the dead which had happened in his own days, and consisted with his personal knowledge.

* Mr Gibbon quotes l. v. c. 6. not adverting that it is not to his purpose, and that Dr Middleton, from whom he had the remark, quoted that chapter with a very different intention.

† Inquiry, p. 74.

1. No other instance of such a miracle is to be found during two centuries after the apostolical times.

Eusebius indeed says that Papias mentions the resuscitation of a dead person. But without inquiring into the degree of authority due to the reports of Papias, it may suffice to observe, that, according to Eusebius, Papias did not speak of what he himself had seen or known, but of what had come to him by tradition, and particularly of what he had learnt from the daughters of Philip, one of the seven deacons *. Now,

* Παραδοξα τινα ισορει και 'αλλα, ως αν εκ παροδοσεως εις αυτον ελθοντα. το μεν εν κοίτῃ τὴν Ἱεραπολιν Φιλιππον τον αποστολον αμα ταις θυγατράσι διατρεψαι, — ως δε κατα τῆς αὔρας ὁ Παπιας γινόμενος, διηγήσιν παρειληφεναι θαυμασιαν, ὑπο των τῶ Φιλιππῶ θυγατρων, μνημονευει, τα νυν σημειώσεων. νεκρῶ γαρ αναστασιν καί' αὐτον γεγονυιαν ισορει. κ. τ. ε. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. iii. c. 39. It is here said, that Papias related what he heard from tradition, and that he spake of what had happened "in his own times," [καί' αὐτον]. A tradition from the daughters of Philip might well be referred to as respecting the days of Papias, who lived in the apostolical times. It is possible that what Papias related on the authority of the daughters of Philip, was the miracle wrought on Eutychus of Troas, mentioned in Acts xx. 9. — 12. This miracle was wrought a very few weeks before the daughters of Philip saw St Paul at Cæsarea: they might have mentioned it to Papias fifty or sixty years after the event; and Papias, fond of anecdotes and traditionary stories, might have imagined the miracle to have

it is certain, that the daughters of Philip lived in the apostolical times ; for they saw St Paul in their father's house at Cæsarea, ten years before the martyrdom of that Apostle.

2. To borrow the words of Dr Jortin, " When Irenæus speaks of resurrections [rather "*resuscitations*], he says the soul *returned*, the "*dead were raised, and remained*, *συν ἡμῖν*, *with* "*us*, that is, *with us Christians* ; but he fixes "*not the time when they were recalled to life,* "*or were to be seen.* It is not evident, there- "*fore, even upon his own account of it, that* "*the dead were raised or remained alive, at the* "*time he wrote.* It is remarkable, that when "*he mentions resurrections, he has the caution* "*always to use the aorist, ἐπεστρέψεν, ἐχαρίσθη,* "*ἡγέρθησαν, παρέμειναν **."

3. Irenæus says, the dead so raised up "*re-* "*mained with us for a considerable number of* "*years ;*" [*παρέμειναν συν ἡμῖν ἱκανοὶς ἐτείσι.*] If any of the persons so raised up had been alive at the time of his writing, he could not, without the highest impropriety of language, have

been something different from what is related in the Acts of the Apostles.

* Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, ii. 206.—208. Dr Middleton, in his translation of the passage, uses the *past* tense ; but he prefixes the word *that*, which, to a mere English reader, gives it the air of the *present*. See Inquiry, p. 11.

used such an expression ; and this leads me to imagine, that Irenæus spake of some past event, and not of any thing which still continued to take place in the Christian church.

4. Quadratus lived before Irenæus. In his oration, addressed to the Emperor Hadrian, he says, that the persons raised from the dead by our Lord, “ remained alive for a considerable “ space, so that some of them reached even un- “ to our times *.” Had Quadratus known of any resuscitations in his own times, it is more than probable, that he would have mentioned them on that occasion ; and there can be no doubt, that if he had mentioned them, Eusebius would have preserved the passage.

5. Neither will it be held presumptuous to observe, that when our Lord thought fit to raise up the dead, he performed that miracle in a public manner, and before witnesses the most unexceptionable, and that his historians have

* Ἦσαν ἐπὶ χρόνον ἱκανόν, ὥς τε καὶ εἰς τὰς ἡμετέρας χρόνους τινες αὐτῶν ἀφίκοντο Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. iv. c. 3. Dr Brooke, by some strange inaccuracy translates the words thus : “ inasmuch that some of “ them were *even at that time still living.*” See Examination of Dr Middleton’s Free Inquiry, p. 238. The words of Quadratus may, with more propriety, be understood of the state of things twenty or thirty years before ; and it is doubted, whether εἰς τὰς ἡμετέρας χρόνους can be understood of the present moment.

carefully recorded all the circumstances relating to such wonderful events. The like observation applies to the resuscitation of Tabitha and of Eutychus, related in the acts of the Apostles*.

It is with pleasure that I have an opportunity of expressing these sentiments in the more forcible language of Dr Middleton. “ In the
 “ history of the Gospel (says he) we find the
 “ miracles of this kind, which were wrought
 “ by our Lord, to have been performed by him
 “ in broad day-light, and in the midst of crouds.
 “ Thus, in the city of Nain, the widow’s son
 “ was raised from the bier, as they were carry-
 “ ing him to his grave, *in the sight of much peo-*
 “ *ple ; so that the rumour of it went forth through*
 “ *all Judea, and all the region round about,*
 “ Luke vii. 17. *The daughter also of the ruler was*
 “ raised by him in such a manner, *that the fame*
 “ *of it is said to have gone abroad into all the land,*
 “ Matth. ix. 26. And in raising Lazarus, *Jesus*
 “ *lift up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee*
 “ *that thou hast heard me. And I knew that*
 “ *thou always hearest me ; but because of the*
 “ *people which stand by, I said it, that they may*
 “ *believe that thou hast sent me : Upon which*
 “ *many of the Jews who had seen the things which*
 “ *he did, believed on him,* John xi. 41. &c. †.”

* Acts ix. 36.---41. ; xx. 9.---12.

† Vindication of Free Inquiry, p. 62.

From all these reasons, complexly considered, one might infer, “that there is no evidence
“sufficient to prove, that after the apostolical
“times, the power of resuscitating the dead
“subsisted in the Christian church.”

In the passage under review concerning the resuscitation of the dead, Mr Gibbon speaks also of the miraculous cure of diseases : of this hereafter ; meanwhile it is proposed to make some remarks as to the other miraculous gifts and powers.

The *gift of tongues* was originally conferred, to be a sign of the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and for enabling the first disciples of our Lord to announce the gospel to all nations.

It was a miracle wrought on the persons who received it. There is little said of it by the writers who lived in the next century after the apostolical times, and that little is expressed in very general terms. Hence we may well hesitate as to the evidence of the gift of tongues having been continued beyond the first century.

Before the end of that century, or the death of St John, the gospel was widely disseminated ; and about that time, the canon of the Scriptures of the New Testament, so far as immediately relates to faith and practice, was well established. Thus we have, in the first century, an universal church, and a written rule for its

direction, drawn up in that language which was most generally understood.

It is probable that, about the same time, there were translations made of the Scriptures of the New Testament into the Latin language * ; that which was generally received and chiefly used, had the name of the *Italic version*. But we have not light enough from the writers who have mentioned those translations to be capable of ascertaining their precise dates.

Hence we might be apt to conclude, that there was a fitness in withdrawing, even at such an early period, the gift of tongues † : but we

* “ Ut enim cuique primis fidei temporibus in manus venit Codex Græcus, et aliquantulum facultatis sibimet utriusque linguæ habere videbatur, ausus est interpretari ;” Augustin. d. Doct. Christ. ii. 11.

† Dr Middleton could see no such fitness, although, on other occasions, he argues from fitness independent of evidence. For he thus speaks : “ I might risk the merit of my argument on this single point, that, after the apostolic times, there is not in all history one instance, either well attested, or even so much as mentioned, of any particular person who had ever exercised that gift, or pretended to exercise it, in any age or country whatsoever. Mr Dodwell supposes it to have ceased in the reign of M. Aurelius, about sixty years after the death of St John. But it is not credible, that a gift of such eminent use should entirely cease, while all the rest were subsisting

are incompetent judges of what is fit or unfit ; and therefore we must add to this, that there is no authority from Scripture, for supposing that

“ in full vigour, and abounding every day more and
“ more. If, according to the common hypothesis,
“ we admit them all to be true, *it is not possible to*
“ *imagine any cause why this in particular should*
“ *be withdrawn.* and the rest continued ; but if,
“ agreeably to my system, we consider them all
“ as fictitious, we then see an obvious and manifest
“ reason for it : For all the other extraordinary
“ gifts, *of healing diseases, casting out devils, visions,*
“ *and ecstatic revelations.* afford great room for
“ impostors to exert all their craft of surprising and
“ dazzling the senses of the simple, the credulous,
“ and the superstitious of all ranks ; whereas *the*
“ *gift of tongues* cannot easily be counterfeited, or
“ a pretension to it imposed on men of sense, or on
“ any, indeed, but those who are utterly illiterate,
“ and strangers to all tongues but their own.”

Inquiry, p. 120. Dr Middleton found it convenient to assume this proposition, That “ if the miraculous
“ gift of tongues did not come down farther than
“ the apostolical times, none of the others did.” Some of his antagonists, instead of denying the proposition, hastily and imprudently maintained the endurance of the gift of tongues in common with every other miraculous gift ; and by supposing the evidence as to each gift to be equal, they embarrassed the controversy. This was just what such a polemical writer as Dr Middleton would have wished. He may have been inferior to some of his antagonists in learning, but in skill he far surpassed them. He led them, before they were aware, to defend too much ground : the consequences will be seen by any one who has studied that controversy.

such a gift was to continue longer, and no sufficient human testimony that it did *.

We know nothing of the time and manner in which the gospel was originally propagated

* The only passage, with respect to *the speaking with tongues*, that occurs in any of the ancient Christian writers, is this of Irenæus. Καθως και πολλων ακκουεν αδελφων εν τη εκκλησια προφητικα χαρισματα εχοντων, και παντοδαπαις λαλουντων δια το Πνευματος γλωσσαις. κ. τ. ε. ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 7. Supposing Irenæus to have meant "that he himself had heard many of the brethren in the church speaking with tongues through the Spirit," we must acknowledge his evidence to be in point, but still it would be single; and, considering the extraordinary nature of the gift, the manner in which Irenæus speaks of it might seem vague and superficial. Perhaps he only meant to relate what he had heard reported by others. The gift of tongues, when originally bestowed on the Apostles and certain of the first converts to Christianity, was not only for a sign of the Holy Spirit, but also for a vehicle to communicate the gospel to the uttermost ends of the world. What Irenæus says has no relation to the propagating of the Christian faith; and although his words were understood in the widest sense, the exercise of the gift could have had no other effect than that of strengthening and confirming believers in a faith which they already held. It is very remarkable, that the ancient apologists, Justin. M. Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tertullian, and Minucius Felix. are silent as to the gift of tongues. Irenæus, in another noted passage, Adv. hæres, i. 2. neither asserts that he himself had that gift, nor acknowledges that he had it not.

amongst nations ignorant of the Greek and Roman languages, and of that dialect of Syria familiar to the Apostles, as inhabitants of Palestine ; and therefore it would be presumptuous to say, *how* the gift of tongues was exercised amongst those nations, or *when* it ceased.

Another of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, was that of *the discerning of spirits*.

“ Amongst the various endowments of the
“ church, some of which were to convict gain-
“ sayers, and others to edify believers, there
“ was one of the latter kind of special use to
“ support the dignity, and to distinguish the
“ divine original of all the rest. And this the
“ Apostle calls *the discerning of spirits* ; a virtue
“ which, like the touch of Ithuriel’s spear in
“ the poet, laid bare the deformity of impos-
“ ture. With this Peter detected Simon the
“ magician, and Paul confounded Elymas the
“ sorcerer.

“ But when the thing itself had ceased, the
“ pretence to inspiration, for some wise ends
“ of Providence to us unknown, still continued
“ to infest the church with its wretched mimic-
“ ries ; while that virtue which was to detect
“ them, *the discerning of spirits*, was withdrawn,
“ with the rest of the inspired graces : and yet
“ the command, to *try the spirits whether they*
“ *were of God*, was still our duty ; but to *try*,

“ without the faculty of *discerning*, would be,
 “ at best, an impertinent employment.

“ From this embarrass we are delivered by
 “ the gracious providence of the Holy Spirit,
 “ who provided, that those whom he had en-
 “ dowed with the gift of *discerning of spirits*,
 “ should leave behind them some rules, where-
 “ by to *try the spirits*, and so to defend them-
 “ selves from the seduction of error and im-
 “ posture *.”

Thus far an eminent writer, in whose *school*,
 to use a fashionable phrase, there is much to be
 learnt by philosophers and theologists.

I do not perceive that the gift of *discerning of
 spirits* continued after the apostolical times.
 The existence of that gift in the days of Ire-
 næus can hardly be inferred from the single and
 indefinite passage in which he speaks of “ many
 “ brethren bringing to light, for the common
 “ utility, the hidden things of men †.” It
 would have been well had the Christians of the
 ages which succeeded that of the Apostles been
 attentive to *try the spirits* according to the rules
 prescribed by our Lord and his Apostles. Had
 they joined the wisdom of serpents to the

* Warburton's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 156.

† Και πολλων ακρομεν αδελφων——τα κρυφια των
 ανθρωπων εις φανερον αγωντων επι τω συμφεροντι. Iren.
 ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 7.

harmlessness of doves, and remarked what are the true fruits of divine grace, “their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence would not have been so often abused by perfidious friends *.”

Had the Christians of the second century possessed the gift of discerning the spirits, their amiable simplicity would not have been imposed upon in the way that Mr Gibbon, after Lucian, relates.

It may be doubted, whether the gift of *prophecy* was bestowed after the apostolical times.

Here, by the *gift of prophecy*, is understood the gift of interpreting the Scriptures of the Old Testament, of applying them to the events of evangelical history, and of foretelling the fates of the church.

Perhaps some loose or rhetorical expressions, implying a farther continuance of the gift of prophecy, may be discovered in the writings of the primitive fathers †; but we have the

* Decline and Fall, i. 573. *Prudens simplicitas* ought to be the motto of every judicious Christian.

† Dr Middleton imagined that the evidence of Justin. M. as to every miraculous gift, might be set aside, on proof that the honest, though inaccurate apologist, arrogated to himself a gift of interpreting the scriptures, which, in truth, he possessed not. Had Dr Middleton made good his assertion, still the conclusions which he meant to draw from it

sacred canon before us, and we have the writings of many of those fathers still extant, and, on inquiry, we shall find that later commentators, who never pretended to the gift of prophecy, have done more towards a rational and scientific application of the Old Testament to the New, than ever the primitive fathers did.

With respect to the foreseeing of the fates of the church, already mentioned as part of the gift of prophecy, it does not appear that the

might have been disputed. But the probability is, that Justin. M. did not pretend to any farther knowledge than what sincere Christians, in general, possessed. His words are, Απεκαλυψεν εν ἡμῖν παντα ὅσα και απο των γραφων δια της χαριτος αυτης νενοηκαμεν.

— Ομοθει αν ἡμας ποτε ὡ ανδρες, νενοηκεναι δυνηθηναι ενταις γραφαις ταυτα, ἐι μη θεληματι τς θελησαντος αυτα ελαβομεν χαριν τς νοηται. Dial. part 2. Be this as it will, Dr Middleton ought not to have rendered δια της χαριτος αυτης. thus, “by the *special* gift of God.” The interpolation of the word “*special*,” is capable of misleading an unlearned reader. See Inquiry, p. 27. 30. Dr Middleton, when pressed by his antagonists on this subject, affirmed that he did not understand the meaning of the theological phrase, *ordinary grace*! See Vindication, p. 47.—54. In the same passage, Dr Middleton translates νοησαι ταυτα, “to understand the Scriptures.” One should have supposed that, by analogy, νενοηκεναι ταυτα meant “to have understood the Scriptures;” but, for the sake of elegance, these words are translated, “to acquire so perfect a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.”

fathers had any further knowledge of that subject than what they obtained from the sacred canon.

But it may be said, that some of the primitive Christians, after the apostolical age, might have had the gift of prophecy, although the fathers themselves had it not.

This, however, is exceedingly improbable: for, had such been the fact, the fathers would have given frequent and unequivocal testimony to it. But there hardly appears a vestige of any thing of that nature, even in the writings of the fathers who lived in the second century*,

* Origen, speaking of the state of things in the early part of the third century, says, "the Christians perform many cures, and they foresee some things, as the Word [ΛΟΓΟΣ] willeth;" [πολλας ιασεις επιτελεσσι, και ορωσι τινα, κατὰ τὸ βελημεν τῶ Λογῷ, Contra Celsum. l. 1. p. 34. edit. Spencer.] It is singular enough that learned men, who differed greatly in other matters, should have concurred in mistranslating such plain words as ορωσι τινα. Spencer renders them "prævident futura," instead of "prævident quædam;" Dr Middleton, "they foresee things to come," Inquiry, p. 14.; and Dr Chapman, "they foretell things to come," Charge, note, p. 98. Thus, as if it were by common consent, they omit the material word *some*, and they leave unlearned readers to conclude, that Origen asserted the gift of prophecy to have been no less general in the early part of the third century than in the apostolical times. This is just the reverse of what he says, as will appear from the passage itself, to be

expecting what is to be seen in Tertullian ; and Tertullian, himself a visionary, and one who looked on Montanus as a person divinely inspired, cannot be admitted in the character of a credible witness for proving the continuance of the gift of prophecy unto his own times.

It may be doubted, whether the knowledge of future events, communicated in the form of a *vision* *, ought to be treated of under the head of miraculous gifts and powers. Let it, however, be observed in general, that we must be very sure of the evidence respecting such knowledge by vision, before we admit the reality of any supposed examples of it. The numberless instances of delusion as to this particular, although not sufficient to authorise an undistinguishing scepticism, are at least sufficient to put us upon our guard against a rash assent to pretensions of this nature. While we admit, and indeed *who* can deny it, that the Divinity

quoted hereafter at full length. Indeed, it may be concluded from the words of Origen, that in his times, there were small pretensions to the foreseeing of events.

* Dr Middleton has spoken of visions in a light style, and with distinguished incorrectness, Inquiry, p. 96—98. There are many learned and useful observations on this subject to be found in Dr Chelsum's Remarks on the two last chapters of Mr Gibbon's History, p. 71.—80.

may at all times communicate the knowledge of future events in the form of a vision, it behoves us to weigh well the evidence produced for proving that the Divinity *did* communicate such knowledge at any time after the apostolical age.

As to "the miraculous powers of expelling "evil spirits, and of healing diseases," there seems to be *more evidence* that they continued in the church after the apostolical age, than there is as to the others formerly mentioned.

With respect to the power of expelling evil spirits from the bodies of men, we must observe in the entrance, that it seems wrong to deny, that, at the coming of our Lord, certain malevolent spirits were permitted to possess men, and to afflict them in a manner to us inexplicable.

This may not be the less true because inexplicable : for there are mysteries no less profound in *the book of nature*, the truth of which is universally admitted, than in *the book of grace*.

Some learned persons, of whose sincerity in the Christian faith there can be no doubt, have, nevertheless, controverted the proposition, that "at the coming of our Lord, certain malevolent "spirits were permitted to possess men ;" yet the texts of Scripture in support of it are so numerous and so express, that hardly any thing

could have produced the fanciful interpretations of *the case of the demoniacs*, but a fond wish of making all circumstances plain in a book which is, from its nature, mysterious, and, until the consummation of all things, will not be fully understood.

In the days of our Lord and his Apostles, possession by evil spirits had the appearance of lunacy and of other diseases.

It has been judiciously observed *, that diseases inflicted by *possessions*, must have resembled the *diseases* which occur in the general course of things. From the likeness of the symptoms in both cases, a possession by evil spirits might have been considered as a natural disease, and a natural disease as a possession by evil spirits.

The sacred historians, writing to the people at large, do not always draw the precise line between those cases; yet, on some occasions, they distinguish, by unambiguous circumstances, *possession* from *disease* †.

That which Christ did by his own authority, his Apostles and his first disciples did in his name; and if it pleased God to permit posses-

* Warburton, Serm. vol. iii. p. 235.

† See, particularly, Matth. iv. 24.; viii. 28.—32.; Mark i. 23.—26.; iii. 11. 12.; v. 6.—13.; Luke iv. 33.—35.; viii. 27.—33.

sions after the apostolical age, we are warranted to conclude, that the persons so possessed were freed from evil spirits *in the name of our Lord*.

There is no doubt that, even after the apostolical age, the Christians pretended to exercise the power of casting out evil spirits.

That this was a mere pretence, founded on collusion, is an extravagant hypothesis. Such a fraud could not have been carried on successfully, and without detection, for upwards of two centuries, by a persecuted and depressed party, whose religion was not only contrary to the religion of the state, but also incompatible with it.

But, possibly, there may be some errors in the circumstances which Tertullian and other ancient writers relate concerning the ejection of evil spirits.

Thus, for example, Minucius Felix speaks of evil spirits, “ who either instantly *spring out*, or “ *disappear* by degrees, as the faith of the patient assists, or the grace of the healer influences *.” The expression, “ grace of the “ healer,” [*gratia curantis*], may mean, “ the “ favour of him who heals,” that is, “ God,”

* “ Vel exiliunt statim, vel evanescent gradatim, “ prout fides patientis adjuvat, aut *gratia curantis* “ aspirat ;” Minucius Felix, c. xxvii. p. 283. edit. Gronovii.

or, "the grace bestowed on the exorcist." In either sense of the expression, it is plain, that a progressive change from disease, of whatever nature, to health, is here meant. Between the cure of demoniacs, properly so called, in the New Testament, and that of the persons mentioned by Minucius Felix, there is this obvious and characteristical difference, that the former is always described to have been instantaneous, and the latter is said to have been sometimes gradual.

To assert that God may not work a miraculous cure by degrees as well as instantly, would be blasphemous and absurd; but still, without offence to reason or piety, we may observe, that a gradual cure, if considered as miraculous, ought to be ascertained by strong evidence indeed; because such a cure has no support from the analogy of miracles admitted to be true, and to a certain degree at least, it participates of the nature of stories whose credit is dubious.

Again, Minucius Felix, in imitation of Tertullian*, says, that an evil spirit, when he was expelled, acknowledged himself to be Saturn, Serapis, Jupiter, or some other imagined divini-

* Tertullian, Apol. c. 23.

ty whom the Pagans worshipped *. *Here* we must be allowed to hesitate. It is probable that most of the gods of Paganism were deified heroes, men who, by reason of their having established equal laws, or invented useful arts, did, after their decease, obtain divine honours from the vulgar.

To this purpose Minucius Felix himself speaks : “ Before the globe was laid open by
“ the intercourse of commerce, and before na-
“ tions borrowed from each other, as well reli-
“ gious ceremonies as manners, each people ve-
“ nerated its founder, or one of its renowned
“ leaders, or a queen superior in fortitude to
“ her sex, or any fellow-citizen, who, by the
“ discovery of some useful art, and by commu-
“ nicating it to mankind, deserved to be held in
“ remembrance. Thus were the dead reward-
“ ed, and, at the same time, posterity was ex-
“ cited to imitate them. Read the works of
“ historians and philosophers, and you will per-
“ ceive the truth of what I assert. Euhemerus
“ enumerates those who have been considered
“ as deities, for their personal merit, or for
“ benefits conferred by them on mankind ; and

* “ Ipse Saturnus, et Serapis, et Jupiter, et quic-
“ quid dæmonum colitis, victi dolore, quod sunt,
“ eloquuntur ;” c. xxvii. p. 280.

“ he recounts their births, countries, and places
 “ of burial, and points them out in various re-
 “ gions*,” &c.

In another place he says, “ All the writers
 “ on antiquity, whether Greek or Roman, have
 “ related that Saturn, the first of this race and
 “ swarm of divinities, was a man.—Now, this
 “ Saturn, dreading the fury of his son, fled
 “ from Crete, and came to Italy; and having
 “ been admitted by Janus to the privileges of
 “ hospitality, he instructed the rude and clown-
 “ ish inhabitants in many things.—He, there-
 “ fore, who fled was a man,—the father of a
 “ man, and himself sprung from man.—Jupiter,
 “ the son of Saturn, his father having been
 “ thrust out, reigned in Crete; *there* he had
 “ sons, and *there* also he died. The cave of Ju-
 “ piter is still visited, his tomb is pointed out,

* “ Denique, et antequam commerciis orbis pate-
 “ ret, et antequam gentes ritus suos moresque misce-
 “ rent, unaquæque natio conditorem suum, aut du-
 “ cem inclytum, aut reginam pudicam sexu suo for-
 “ tiorem, aut alicujus muneris vel artis repertorem,
 “ venerebatur, ut civem bonæ memoriæ; sic et de-
 “ functis præmium et futuris dabatur exemplum:
 “ lege historicorum [al. Stoicorum] scripta, vel scrip-
 “ ta sapientium; eadem mecum recognosces; ob
 “ merita virtutis, aut muneris deos habitos, Euheme-
 “ rus exsequitur, et eorum natales, patrias, sepulchra
 “ dinumerat, et par provincias monstrat,” &c. Mi-
 nuc. Felix, c. xx. xxi.

“ and he is proved to be a mortal from the very
 “ nature of the sacred rites instituted in his ho-
 “ nour *.”

There are other passages in the same author which admit the truth of the system of hero-worship; and I must own, that it always appeared singular to me, that Saturn, who was, in the opinion of Minucius Felix, a king of Crete, and the instructor of rude Italy, should have been represented, by the same author, as an evil spirit afflicting the bodies of men.

The system of hero-worship has so much support from Pagan antiquity, and, at the same time, is so necessary for the interpretation of many texts in Scripture, that it is not to be light-

* “ Saturnum enim, principem hujus generis et
 “ examinis, omnes scriptores vetustatis, Græci Roma-
 “ nique, hominem prodiderunt.—Is, itaque Satur-
 “ nus, Cræta profugus, Italiam, metu filii sævientis,
 “ accesserat; et Jani susceptus hospitio, rudes illos
 “ homines et agrestes multa docuit.—Homo igitur
 “ utique qui fugit—et pater hominis, et natus ex ho-
 “ mine—Ejus filius Jupiter Crætæ, excluso parente,
 “ regnavit; illic obiit, illic filios habuit. Adhuc
 “ antrum Jovis visitur, et sepulchrum ejus ostenditur,
 “ et ipsis sacris suis humanitatis arguitur,” c. xxii.
 The translation of Minucius Felix, which I published in 1781, is here used with some changes of phrase. *That* translation owes much to the learned persons who revised it. The introductory paragraph, in particular, far excels any thing that I could have written without assistance.

ly abandoned. Rather than abandon it, let us grant that Tertullian erred in his narrative, and that Minucius Felix contradicted himself.

Under this head, there occurs another circumstance which well deserves our attention. From what Tertullian and Minucius Felix have recorded, one should be apt to suppose, that this expulsion of Saturn and his fellows was effected not once only, but on repeated occasions. Now, if the Christians, in the second and third centuries, had the power of casting out Saturn, is it not strange, that a repetition of the like form of exorcising him, should have again become necessary?

Although we should grant, that when the patient talked in the character of Saturn, Serapis, or Jupiter, he was a mere lunatic, and not one under the thralldom of an evil spirit, it does not follow, that he was not actually cured of a disease by the intervention of the Christians.

This circumstance has not been sufficiently attended to; and I make no doubt that there are persons who hold the state of the case to be this, "either Saturn, Serapis, or Jupiter, was expelled from the body of a man, or there was a shameful collusion between the supposed patient and the Christians who pretended to heal him." The former hypothesis might

stumble many a sincere believer, and the latter would be eagerly adopted by infidels.

But the cure might have been real and miraculous, although the condition of the patient might have been misunderstood.

The instantaneous restoration of a lunatic to sound mind, will be admitted to bear, at least, as many marks of a miracle as the instantaneous restoration to health of a person afflicted with any other known disease, whether acute or chronical.

And thus, although we should suppose, that, in the second and third centuries, certain persons were said to have had evil spirits ejected out of them, while, in truth, they were, without human means, relieved from a state of lunacy, it does not follow, that no miraculous power was displayed in their cure.

The hypothesis here suggested will not diminish the number of the cures, although it may remove some of them from one class into another.

This leads us to consider "the miraculous power exerted in the healing of diseases." And here it must be repeated, that the number of the miracles supposed to have been wrought in the second and third centuries, would not be diminished, although some of them should have been wrought on *lunatics*, and not on persons

possessed. For it is no less a miracle to cure lunacy, at once, and by no other means but prayer, than it is to expel evil spirits. So, if the observations just now made have any weight, the result will be, that the primitive Christians more rarely expelled evil spirits, and more frequently cured natural diseases, than they are reported to have done.

Mighty things are said of *the power of imagination*; but that it should instantaneously restore lunatics to a sound mind, is something so very incredible *, that he who can persuade himself to believe it, will have small cause for insulting the Christians on account of their easy faith !

The ecclesiastical writers of the second and third centuries invariably assert, that many diseases were healed by the prayers of the Christians. As they often speak on the credit of others, and not from their own observation, it is possible that, in some of their reports, there may be circumstances exaggerated, and even mistakes; and it must be admitted, that their evidence loses much of the credibility which it would otherwise have had, when they speak of

* There may, possibly, be some very rare examples of this; but I speak, as one ought to speak on such occasions, of daily experience, and the ordinary course of things.

diseases having been cured, and yet do not mention *by* whom or *on* whom the cures were performed.

But they do not always speak in such general terms. Thus, for example, Tertullian enters into particulars, when he describes a cure wrought by Proculus, a Christian, in the days of the Emperor Severus.

This narrative is curious and interesting, and it has been thought worthy of some strictures by Mr Gibbon.

“ The Emperor [Severus], says he, was *persuaded* that, in a dangerous sickness, he had derived *some benefit*, either *spiritual* or *physical*, from the holy oil with which *one of his slaves* had anointed him. He always treated with peculiar distinction several persons of both sexes who had embraced the new religion.” Mr Gibbon adds, [note 108.] “ Dr Jortin, *Remarks on ecclesiastical history*, v. ii. p. 5. &c. considers the cure of Severus, by means of holy oil, with a strong desire to convert it into a miracle,” i. 668.

This story, related incidentally by Tertullian *, deserves a more accurate examination than either the assertors of *the miraculous powers*,

* Ad Scapulam, c. 4.

or their antagonists, have chosen to bestow on it *.

For the better understanding of this story, we must examine it as connected with the preceding part of Tertullian's discourse. The style of that writer is, in general, harsh and abrupt, and hence his meaning becomes frequently obscure; yet I hope to make the passage in question intelligible to every unprejudiced reader.

Tertullian, with a generous and manly spirit, censures Scapula, the President of Africa, because, contrary to the practice of some former magistrates, he had gone beyond the letter of the Imperial edict in persecuting the Christians. The author adds, " Every thing of this nature
" might, in duty, be suggested to you by those
" very pleaders of yours, who, let them make
" what outcry they will, enjoy benefits conferred on them by the Christians: for a certain person's secretary [or clerk], who had

† Dr Church could not find room, in a treatise of four hundred pages, to say any thing as to this cure; and so he left it, as he found it, exposed to the glosses of Dr Middleton. Neither has Dr Dodwell said much on the subject; and yet both of them found room to attempt a vindication of Justin. M. for having asserted that the Romans reared an altar to Simon Magus! See Vindication of the miraculous powers, p. 154. and Free Answer to the Free Inquiry, p. 67.

“ been thrown headlong by a demon, was set at
 “ liberty ; and so also were a kinsman and a lit-
 “ tle boy of other persons. And how many
 “ men of rank are there, for I speak not of the
 “ lower sort, who have been relieved either
 “ from demons or maladies*? Besides, Severus
 “ himself, the father of Antoninus, was mind-
 “ ful of the Christians : for he sought after
 “ Proculus, surnamed *Torpacion*, a Christian,
 “ and the steward of Euhoda, [or Euhodus],
 “ who had, on a particular occasion, cured him
 “ by oil, and he retained him at court as long
 “ as he lived. Antoninus, nursed on Christian
 “ milk, knew the man well. Severus also, in-
 “ stead of doing harm to very distinguished per-
 “ sons of both sexes, whom he knew to be of
 “ that religion, gave a favourable testimony to
 “ them, and even openly set himself against the
 “ multitude, when raging against us †.”

* Tertullian undoubtedly meant to have added
 “ by the Christians ;” for the context requires that
 addition.

† “ Hæc omnia tibi et de officio suggeri possunt,
 “ et ab eisdem advocatis, qui et ipsi beneficia habent
 “ Christianorum, licet adclament quæ volunt : nam
 “ et cujusdam notarius, cum a dæmone præcipitare-
 “ tur, liberatus est, et quorundam propinquus, et
 “ puerulus. Et quanti honesti viri, de vulgaribus
 “ enim non dicimus, aut a dæmoniis aut a valetudi-
 “ nibus remediati sunt ? Ipse etiam Severus, pater

Here the first thing to be inquired is, at what time did Tertullian address this treatise to Scapula? Pamelius says, that it was in the *ninth* year of Severus [A. D. 202.]; but he gives no sufficient reasons for his conjecture.

Thus much is certain, that it was not before the *seventh* year of Severus [A. D. 200.], when that Emperor began to persecute the Christians; nor after the *sixteenth* year [A. D. 209.], when the persecution appears to have been staid *.

“Antonini Christianorum memor fuit: nam et
 “Proculum, Christianum, qui Torpacion cognomi-
 “nabatur, Euhodæ [Euhodi] procuratorem, qui eum
 “per oleum aliquando curaverat, requisivit, et in
 “palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem ejus: quem et
 “Antoninus optime noverat, lacte Christiano educa-
 “tus. Sed et clarissimas foeminas et clarissimos vi-
 “ros Severus, sciens hujus sectæ esse, non modo non
 “læsit, verum et testimonio exornavit, et populo fu-
 “renti in nos [*al. in os*] palam restitit.” Ad Scapulam, c. 4.

* It is not improbable, that the persecution began somewhat later than is here supposed, and ended, in Africa at least, somewhat sooner.—Mosheim says, [d. Reb. Christ. ante Constantin. M. p. 456. 457.], that the treatise ad Scapulam, was drawn up about the beginning of the reign of Caracalla. Certainly it could not have been drawn up at any later period: for, towards the conclusion of the treatise, Tertullian speaks of *emperors* in the plural number: “Magistrum neminem habemus, nisi Deum solum
 “—cæterum quos putas tibi magistros, homines
 “sunt, et ipsi morituri quandoque.” This phrase is

We now proceed to examine the import of the passage in question.

Tertullian says, that the pleaders or advocates had received benefit by the cures which their dependents and relations owed to the Christians; and, therefore, that they should have

applicable to no year of Caracalla but the first, during which he reigned in conjunction with his brother Geta. It is, however, very unlikely, that Caracalla should have begun his reign by persecuting those men whom he suffered to continue in tranquillity during the remainder of it. Besides, Sulpicius Severus reckons the whole years of Caracalla under that period, which is commonly called *the long peace of the church*. Perhaps Mosheim founded his opinion on the words "ipse etiam Severus, pater Antonini," as if implying that Severus was then dead: But the words may mean nothing more than a compliment to the young Emperor, by distinguishing the old Emperor as *the father of Antoninus*. There are other expressions in this passage calculated to gain the favour of Caracalla. If Mosheim founded his opinion on the words "et in Palatio suo habuit *usque ad mortem ejus*," and understood them of the death of Severus, and not of Proculus, he surely mistook their sense: for, according to his own hypothesis, the address to Scapula was drawn up in the first year of Caracalla. If "*usque ad mortem ejus*" mean "until the death of Severus," Proculus was either alive at the time of Tertullian's writing, or had died but a few months before. Now, the phrase which follows, "quem et Antoninus optime novet," cannot be applied to one either alive at that time, or lately dead.

suggested to Scapula the propriety of limiting penal edicts to the express letter of the law. It is exceedingly probable that, in mentioning the cure wrought on *the clerk of a certain person*, he had a particular man in view, whose name he thought fit to conceal, either from motives of prudence, or for the purpose of introducing a rhetorical innuendo.

According to the description given by Tertullian, the man of whom he speaks had the symptoms of an epilepsy. That I may not blend one controversy with another, I shall not attempt to determine whether the disease proceeded from what are called natural causes, or from the permitted agency of some malevolent spirit. It is enough to say, that the man laboured under a grievous disease *; and, so far as we may give credit to Tertullian, was cured by the interposition of the Christians. The same thing may be said as to the other cures here mentioned, with this difference only, that as to them, the narrative is more general, and that there are no

* History, from the days of Julius Cæsar until our own times, informs us, that fits of the epilepsy may be mitigated by means of an exact regimen. Whether the disease be curable, is a question which physicians can best answer. It may, however, be presumed, that neither *the force of imagination*, nor *natural strength of constitution*, can remove the epilepsy.

circumstances in it which so directly allude to any individual, as the words "clerk of a certain person" do.

Thus far it is supposed that all my readers will agree with me as to the state of the fact.

Tertullian immediately adds, "Severus himself was mindful of the Christians." This translation, by being literal, falls short of the sense of the original. Since it is said, that Severus, a persecuting Prince, was "Christianorum memor;" it may be fairly concluded, that some benefit, thought to have been conferred on himself, or on a person in whom he took an interest, excited a grateful remembrance, very unlike the harsh character of Severus.

The next thing to be inquired into is, what did any Christian perform that could have induced such a man as Severus to bestow marks of distinguished favour on one Christian, to be merciful, by connivance at least, towards many others, and, even on some occasions, to stay the raging of the people, whom his own edicts had animated in the bloody work of persecution?

Here also it is supposed that all my readers will admit the question to be fairly stated.

Examples of the benignity of a Pagan and persecuting emperor, when recorded by an adversary, will, in particular, obtain easy credit with those who judge favourably enough of Pa-

gan and persecuting emperors, and not too favourably of their adversaries.

“Severus bestowed peculiar marks of his regard on Proculus, a Christian, the steward of Euhodus, who had cured *him* by oil.” This is a brief state of what Tertullian says.

It is generally supposed, and with very great probability, that the *Euhodus* here mentioned, was a person much distinguished in the days of Severus, and one perfectly well known to Scapula, and to every reader of the treatise addressed by Tertullian to that President.

We can hardly imagine that Tertullian would have described Proculus, surnamed *Torpacion*, by calling him “the steward of *Euhoda*,” of a woman altogether obscure, and bearing a servile name : but there is much propriety in describing him as “the steward of *Euhodus*.”

Euhodus, from the slave* of Severus, became his freedman, and one of his chief favourites, had the charge of the education of Caracalla †,

* The name of Euhodus was frequently borne by slaves and freedmen. See Gruter. Inscript. t. iv. p. 181. ; though, indeed, it may be rather termed a nickname, or *nom de guerre*, implying *good luck* ; or more appositely in French, *le parvenu* : so also Euhoda must have been a servile name, being the feminine of Euhodus.

† Mr Gibbon says, that the preceptor of Caracalla was a Christian, vol. i. p. 668 ; but he produces

remained in high credit during the life of his old master, and was put to death by his pupil*.

no authority in support of his assertion. He adds, "If that young prince ever betrayed a sentiment of humanity, it was occasioned by an incident, which, however trifling, bore some relation to the cause of Christianity." What he alludes to is the passage so often quoted from Spartian. "Septennis puer, quum collusorem suum puerum, ob Judaicam religionem gravius verberatum audisset, neque patrem suum neque patrem pueri vel auctores verberum diu respexit." *Æl. Spartian, Antoninus Caracallus, in princip.* I never could understand this passage, concerning a play-fellow of Caracalla, who was severely whipped *on account of the Jewish religion*, to the great displeasure of that young prince. One thing, however, seems plain, that Dr Lardner, *Testim. iii. 4.* is much mistaken in his conjecture, that *Judaica religio* means *Christianity*. Some of the earlier Heathen writers may have confounded the two religions; but it is impossible that Spartian could; for he lived in the days of Constantine the Great. It is singular, indeed, that Mr Gibbon should have produced this story as the only proof of Caracalla having ever betrayed a sentiment of humanity. For Spartian, in that very page of his work, says, that Caracalla, during his earlier years, shewed many signs of a good disposition; and that, in particular, when criminals were exposed to wild beasts in his presence, he turned away his eyes from the spectacle and wept, ["si quando feris objectos damnatos vidit, flevit, aut oculos avertit."] Mr Gibbon has overlooked this, and much more, and has confined himself to the story of the Jewish boy.

* Concerning Euhodus, see Dion Cassius, l. lxxv. p. 861. 862. l. lxxvii. p. 870. edit. Leunclavii.

But *whom* did Proculus cure? was it Severus or Euhodius?

Dr Middleton says, "Tertullian tells us, that Proculus, a Christian, cured the Emperor Severus of a certain distemper by "the use of oil." He does not deny that the cure was performed, but he attempts to account for it from natural causes *.

† Inquiry, p. 76. Dr Middleton manages this argument with much controversial skill. To the narrative of Tertullian, concerning a fact said to have happened in his own times, and almost under his eyes, he joins the narrative of Jerom concerning a fact said to have happened in a remote country before Jerom was born; and having thus joined the two stories, he takes it for granted that they must stand or fall together. "St Jerom (says he) affirms, *that Hilarion, the Monk, used to heal all the wounds of the husbandmen and shepherds with consecrated oil.*—These cures, if true, might be accounted for probably without a miracle, by the natural power and efficacy of the oil itself; since, in our days, the bite of vipers, after inflaming a man's arm to a degree which threatened destruction to him, is known to have been checked and cured in a short time by the application of oil, which might *perhaps* have been the *very case* of Hilarion's shepherds."

This *perhaps* is incomparable: for, in the passage alluded to, Jerom says expressly, that the shepherds whom Hilarion cured, "had been smitten by serpents and other venomous animals." Jerom related the circumstances of the fact fairly, though, possibly, his conclusion from them was erroneous. Dr

Mr Gibbon steps beyond Dr Middleton's conjecture, and supposes that there was no cure at all; but that Severus just persuaded himself, that he got *some benefit* by oil with which *one of his slaves* anointed him *. Nay more, Mr Gib-

Middleton omitted those circumstances, and then produced them as a conjecture of his own. The passage, which he has curtailed, runs thus: "Ecce sitiens arenosaque regio, postquam pluviis irrigata est, tantam [*l. tanta*] *serpentum et venenatorum animalium* ebullivit multitudinem [*l. multitudine*], ut percussi innumerabiles, nisi ad Hilarionem currissent, statim interirent. Benedicto itaque oleo universi agricolæ atque pastores tangentes vulnera, certam [*al. certatim*] salutem resumebant."

Vita Hilarion. c. 27. Dr Middleton, on the authority of Jerom, has extended the cure to *all* wounds, while Jerom himself limits it to the cure of wounds inflicted by the bite or stings of venomous animals.

—It is not certain that the words "*benedicto oleo*" ought to be rendered, "with consecrated oil," in the common acceptation of the phrase. It rather seems to mean, "with oil on which Hilarion had prayed for a blessing." Men no less free from superstitious fancies than Dr Middleton ever was, pray for a blessing on medicines administered. "*Mensa benedicta*," in the language of Jerom's age, is "a table at which grace has been said," and "*cibus benedictus*" is "food for which a blessing has been asked," not "a consecrated table," or "consecrated food."

* It is impossible to discover the source of this anecdote. Tertullian says no such thing; and he is equally silent as to *some benefit*, perhaps of a *spiritual nature*, which Severus *persuaded himself* that

bon leaves it uncertain, whether this benefit, however small or ambiguous, was of a *spiritual nature*, or something which merely respected the health of the patient.

Notwithstanding the authority of Dr Middleton, Mr Gibbon, and many other writers, I incline to think that the cure was wrought, or supposed to have been wrought, on Euhodus, and not on Severus; and that Severus having heard of the relief which his favourite had obtained, sought after Proculus, and kept him about his person.

The words in Tertullian may as well imply, that Proculus cured Euhodus, as that he cured Severus.

When the phrase "*Proculum requisivit*" is considered, it seems inconsistent with the notion of Proculus having cured Severus himself. The Emperor, had he been cured by oil which Proculus administered, would have had no occasion to seek after or inquire for his physician.

It is probable that hitherto my readers, in general, will see no great cause to controvert the

he had received from the anointing with oil. Indeed, he says, which Mr Gibbon has overlooked, that, in the times of Severus, eminent persons of both sexes professed the Christian religion, but he makes no mention of Proculus as a Christian slave.

facts and circumstances which I have endeavoured to establish.

But now there occurs an observation, which, if well founded, might supersede all further inquiry into the nature of the cure wrought by Proculus.

One of the writers in the controversy concerning *The miraculous powers*, thus speaks :
“ Tertullian, who relates the story, makes no
“ mention at all of a miracle in the case. His
“ words are these : *A Christian named Proculus,*
“ *cured the Emperor Severus of a certain distem-*
“ *per by the use of oil ; for which service the Em-*
“ *peror was favourable to the Christians, and kept*
“ *Proculus, as long as he lived, in his palace* *.

If Tertullian, who lived at the time when the cure was performed, *made no mention at all of a miracle*, it would be preposterous for us, in the eighteenth century, to attempt to discover more in the story than this, that Proculus cured Euhodus or Severus by oil.

It appears, however, from the context, although not from Dr Middleton's quotation, that Tertullian supposed that the cure by oil, and the cures of the epilepsy and other diseases which he mentions, were all of the same na-

* Defence of Dr Middleton's Free Inquiry, by Frederick Toll, A. M. p. 98.

ture, the operation of God through the ministry of the Christians.

We learn from the work of Serenus Sammonicus*, a celebrated physician at the court of Severus, that oil of various sorts was much used in the *Recipes* of those days. Oil indeed appears to have been at that time the popular and fashionable medicine; and therefore it would have been trifling in Tertullian, to have said that Proculus cured Euhodus with a medicine generally used.

The sense of the author seems to be altogether different. When the sacred historian says, that the Apostles "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them," Mark vi. 13. he

* Q. Sereni Sammonici de Medicina liber. — H. Stephan. d. Med. princ. confounds him with his son, who was preceptor to the younger Gordian, and who left in legacy to his pupil a library of sixty-two thousand volumes, Jul. Capitolin. Gordianus junior, p. 159. that very library of which Mr Gibbon thus speaks, "*Twenty-two* concubines, and a library of "*sixty-two* thousand volumes, attested the variety of "his inclinations; and from the *productions* which "he left behind him, it appears that the former as "well as the latter were designed for use rather "than for ostentation," vol. i. p. 215. Pity that Gordian had not collected four thousand volumes in addition to the legacy; then it might have been said, that for every three thousand of volumes in his library, he had *one* concubine and *three* bastards, and the antithesis would have been complete.

surely does not mean that it was the oil which healed the sick ; but he means that the Apostles, in working the cure, used oil as a symbol of the authority of Christ, the spiritual sovereign, by whose commission, and in whose name they acted.

Had Tertullian said, "Proculus anointed with oil Euhodus, who was sick, and healed him," we should have concluded immediately, that, by using the words of the evangelist, he meant to refer to the evangelical history, and that he supposed the cure to be miraculous. But the context being considered, it should seem that Tertullian has expressed himself in words equivalent to those used by St Mark *.

* The reader will judge whether the words "*per oleum*" do not mean "*by the oil*;" the idiom of the Latin language is such, that a periphrasis is necessary for conveying a sense corresponding to these words "*the oil*." Hence modern writers in Latin would, in such case, have prefixed the Greek article thus : "*per το oleum*."

It is more likely that, in the cure of Euhodus, Proculus imitated the practice of the apostles, Mark vi. 13. than that he meant to act in conformity to the directions given by St James, v. 14. : for that which St James directs to be done appears limited to the case of believers. "Is any sick *among you*, let him send for the *elders* of the church," &c. [*αποθνησκει τις εν υμιν, προσκαλεσασθω της πρεσβυτερας της εκκλησιας.*] Besides, there is no reason to suppose that Proculus was a *presbyter* ; for the office of *presbyter*, in the

It remains for us to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the time at which this cure was wrought.

Euhodus, the slave, and afterwards the freedman of Severus, must have owed to his patron that wealth which obliged or enabled him to maintain Proculus as his steward or intendant.

The fortune of Euhodus must have been acquired during the reign of Severus, and not before it.

We learn from Spartian, that Severus, born in a state of mediocrity, lived in a frugal manner, and perhaps affectedly, after the old Roman fashion. Although he had governed Sicily and Pannonia with proconsular powers, and had even borne the office of consul, he continued to reside in a small and inconvenient dwelling at Rome, and was proprietor of no more than a single farm. It was not till about the last years of Commodus, that he purchased a larger house, with gardens, according to the fashion of that age *. At the time of his ele-

second century, could hardly have been compatible with that of steward or intendant to Euhodus.

* “ Consulatam cum Apuleio Ruffino primum egit — post consulatum anno ferme fuit Romæ otiosus : deinde — exercitui Germanico [leg. Pannonico] præponitur. Proficiscens — hortos spatiosos comparavit, *quum antea ædes brevissimas Romæ habuisset, et unum fundum.*” Æl. Spartian, Severus, p. 65.

vation to sovereign power he was in debt, contracted, probably, with a view to the accomplishing of his ambitious purposes *.

Severus, having been proclaimed Emperor, underwent great toils and much danger before he could establish himself on the Imperial throne.

Every one who has carefully perused the histories of Dion Cassius, Spartian, and Herodian, will admit that Severus could not have had leisure or opportunity to bestow considerable donatives on a freedman, until the *fourth* year of his reign.

Hence it may be concluded, that Proculus could not have been the administrator of the rents and issues of such donatives sooner than the *fourth* year of Severus; and that the cure wrought by him on Euhodus could not, in the probability of human events, have happened at an earlier period.

We have formerly seen, that it was in the

* “ Dehinc æs alienum dissolvit, *Æl.* Spartian, p. 67. Salmasius, struck with the rage of emendation, perverted the text, and made Spartian say, that Severus discharged, not his own debts, but the debts of his friends; *Not. ad Spartian, p. 136.* whereas Spartian meant to extol the integrity of the Emperor, in making payments which none of his creditors durst or could have exacted.

sixteenth year of Severus, at the latest, that Tertullian, addressing himself to Scapula, the African governor, spake of the cure wrought by Proculus, a Christian.

Thus the event which Tertullian relates, must have happened within *twelve* years of the time at which he related it.

There was a constant intercourse between Carthage, where Tertullian resided, and the capital; and we may well affirm, that any thing singular occurring at Rome would have been known at Carthage as soon as, in our own days, any thing singular occurring at London would be known at Hamburg or Bourdeaux.

Besides, Pamelius, *vita Tertull.* has proved that Tertullian was at Rome in the *ninth* year of Severus, when he exhibited his triumph over the Parthians, that is, within *five* years of the time at which, by the calculation already mentioned, Proculus wrought the cure of Euholdus.

So much for Tertullian, who wrote about the beginning of the third century. What was the state of the miraculous powers in a few years after the time of Tertullian, will be best known from the writings of Origen.

In various passages of his treatise against Celsus, he has made mention of such miraculous

powers, as, according to his account, existed in the earlier part of the third century.

Thus, he says : “ But we, should Celsus deem
 “ it to be proper, are ready to point out an un-
 “ speakable multitude of Greeks as well as
 “ Barbarians, who acknowledge Jesus ; and
 “ some of them, by the cures which they per-
 “ form, shew how a certain supernatural power
 “ is received through that faith. The only
 “ means which they employ, in behalf of those
 “ who need healing, are, to invoke God over
 “ all, and the name of Jesus, and to read a por-
 “ tion of evangelical history. For, after this
 “ manner, *we also have seen* many persons relie-
 “ ved from grievous diseases, from disorders of
 “ the judgment, from madness, and various
 “ other maladies, which neither men nor de-
 “ mons could have cured *.”

* Ἡμεῖς γὰρ, εἰ τὸ τοῦτο σέεινον νομίζῃ, ἐκαστὸς δεικνύμενον ἀμυνόμενον τι πλῆθος Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ βαρβάρων ἐμολογούντων τῷ Ἰησοῦ· τινες τε σημεία τε εἰληφέναι τι διὰ τὴν πίσιν ταύτην παραδοξότερον, ἐπιδείκνυνται ἐν οἷς θεραπεύεσθιν· ἔδιν' αὖτε καὶ ἄλλοι καλῶντες ἐπὶ τῆς δεικνύμενης θεραπείας, ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ παντὶ Θεόν. καὶ τὸ τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὄνομα, μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱστορίας· τοιοῦτοι γὰρ ΚΑΙ ΗΜΕΙΣ ΕΩΡΑΚΑΜΕΝ πολλὰς ἀπαλλὰγντας χαλεπῶν συμπτωμάτων, καὶ ἐκστασιῶν καὶ μανιῶν, καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων, ἀπὸ αὐτῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅτε δαίμονες ἐθεραπεύσαν. Contra Celsum, l. iii. p. 124. edit. Spencer. Origen uses χαλεπῶν συμπτωμάτων, [bad symptoms,

It should seem that, in the fair construction of words, this imports, that Origen had been an eye-witness to the wonderful cures which he describes ; and, if any Christian witness can be admitted at all, it will be difficult to point out one of more credibility than Origen.

To the same purpose, although with more brevity, he elsewhere speaks : “ It is observable, that, after the time at which Jesus so-
“ journeyed upon earth, the Jews became alto-
“ gether deserted ; and that they retained no lon-
“ ger any of the things which of old were held
“ in high estimation amongst them. There is
“ no sign left of some divinity residing with
“ them ; no more prophets or miracles. Of
“ these, however, after so long a period, the
“ vestiges are still to be found amongst Chri-
“ stians, and some of them considerable too :
“ and, *if my testimony be admitted as credible, I*
“ *myself have seen them* *.”

des accidents facheux], for “ dangerous diseases ;” *εκτασις*, translated “ disorder of the judgment,” implies “ any suspension of the rational faculties.”

* Εσιν εν ιδαν μετα την Ιησω επιδημιαν, Ισθαις καταλειμμενες παντη, και μηδεν εχοντας των παλαι νομιζομενων αυτοις ειναι σεμνων. αλλα και μηδεν σημειον τε ειναι τινα θιοτητα παρ’ αυτοις. εκ ετι γαρ προφηται, εδε τερασια, ων καν ιχνη επι ποσον παρα Χριστιανοις ευρισκεται, και τινα γε μειζονα. και ει πισοι εσμεν λεγοντες, εωρακαμεν και ημεις. *Contra Celsum*, l. ii. p. 62. In the same book, p. 80.

Another passage in the same work, is remarkable on many accounts. Origen says, “ I am of opinion that the miracles of Jesus, which Celsus calumniously says he learnt among the Egyptians to perform, afford evidence of the Holy Spirit having appeared in the likeness of a dove ; and, in support of my opinion, I argue not only from them, but also, with probable grounds, from those which the Apostles of Jesus performed. And indeed, without the operation of miracles, the Apostles could not have moved men, who had new notions and new doctrines proposed to them, to abandon the religious rites of their country, and, with hazards even unto death, to admit what those teachers taught : and *still* the vestiges of that Holy Spirit, which appeared in the likeness of a dove, are preserved among Christians ; for they expel* demons, and perform many cures ; and,

he speaks, in general terms, of persons having been healed in the name of Christ : *μεχρι σημερον θεραπευσθαι τω ονοματι αυτου ως ο Θεος βελεται.*

* The word *expel* is used, although not a proper translation of *εξιπαδωσι*. The verb *εξιπαδω*, however uncommon, is classical. Origen, on this occasion, has been more studious of the purity of his Greek, than of correctness in theological language. He ought not to have spoken of *charms* or, rather, if the word may be admitted, of *decantations*.

“ as THE WORD [ΛΟΓΟΣ] willeth, they foresee
 “ *some things* : and, however much Celsus, or
 “ the Jew whom he has introduced, may scoff
 “ at it, *this* shall be said, that many persons
 “ have been converted to Christianity, as if
 “ against their will, through some inspiration,
 “ acting with energy upon them in visions or in
 “ dreams, which suddenly changed their mind
 “ from hatred of the word to a willingness of
 “ dying for it. Indeed many instances of this
 “ nature have come within my own knowledge;
 “ and were I to commit to writing those at
 “ which I was present, and an eye-witness, it
 “ would lay me open to the derision of unbe-
 “ lievers*; and they would suppose me to feign
 “ stories just as they suppose others to do : yet
 “ God and my own conscience are witnesses
 “ that my intention is, not by fictitious narra-
 “ tives, but by variety of authentic evidence, to
 “ establish the divine doctrine of Jesus †.”

* Γέλωτα πλατὺν ὀφλησμεν τοῖς ἀπιστοῖς. *Here Ozi-*
gen complains of “ the broad grin of infidelity.”
 But “ the simper of infidelity” is much more intoler-
 able ; for ridicule cannot silence, and argument can-
 not confute a simpering infidel.

† Σημειον δε οἶμαι τὸ τε ὀφθιντος ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐν εἰδῇ
 περιστρέφας, τὰ ὑπὸ τῆς Ἰησοῦ παραδόξῃ γεγεννημένα· ἅτινα δια-
 βάλλων Κέλσος, φησιν αὐτὸν παρ’ Αἰγυπτίοις μεμαθηκότα
 πεποιηκέναι. καὶ ἐκ ἐκείνοις γε μόνοις χρῆσθαι. ἀλλὰ γὰρ,
 κατὰ τὸ εἶκος, καὶ οἷς οἱ Ἀποστόλοι τῆς Ἰησοῦ πεποιηκασιν. ἔκ

In this passage, the testimony of Origen is unambiguous, so far as it goes, with respect to the healing of diseases. It must, however, be acknowledged, that Origen does not *here*, as in the passages formerly quoted, state himself as an eye-witness of the cures which he relates. But this seems of little moment; for no one but a captious reader will require that an author, who has repeated occasions of mentioning the same subject, should always treat it with the same degree of precision.

So far as I have been able to discover, there is no passage of Origen, in which he asserts

αν γαρ χωρις δυναμεων και παραδοξων εκινεν τας καινων λογων και καινων μαθηματων ακουοντας προς το καταλιπειν μεν τα πατρια, παραδεξασθαι δε, μετα κινδυνων των μεχρι θανατου, τα των μαθηματων· και επι ιχνη των αγιων εκεινους πνευματος, ορθεντος εν ειδει περιστερας, πασα Χριστιανοις σαζεται. εξεπαδουσι δαιμονας, και πολλας ιασεις επιτελουσι, και ερωσι τινα, κατα το βελημα των Λογων, περι μελλοντων. και χλευατη δε Κελτος το λεχθησομενον, η, εν ειτηρχεν, Ισθαιος· ομως λελεξεται, οτι πολλοι, ωσπερι ακοντες, προσεληλυθασι Χριστιανισμο. πνευματος τινος τρεψαντος αυτων το ηγεμονικον αιφνιδιον απο των μισειν τον λογον επι το υπεραποθανειν αυτους και φαντασιωσαντος αυτους, υπαρ η οναρ. πολλα γαρ και τοιαυτα ισορημεν· ατινα εαν γραφαμεν, αυτοι αυτους παρτυχοντες και ιδοντες, γελωτα πλατυν εφλησομεν τοις απιστοις οιομενοις ημας ομοιως ος υπολαμβανουσι ταυτ' αναπιπτακειναι, και αυτες πλατουσιν· αλλα γαρ Θεος μαρτυς των ημετερων συνειδοτος, βελομενς ε δια ψευδων απαγγελιων, αλλα δια τινος εναργειας ποικιλης συνιστανει την Ιησθ θειαν διδασκαλιαν. Contra Celsum, l. i. p. 34. 35. edit. Spencer.

himself to have been present at the expelling of any demon. The accuracy with which he discriminates between what he believed on the report of others, and what he believed on the testimony of his own senses, is remarkable, and it adds to the credibility of his evidence.

I have said, that in the passage last quoted, “Origen does not state himself as an eye-witness of the cures which he relates;” because what he observes of sudden conversions to the Christian faith, has no relation to any miraculous powers subsisting in the church; it relates to a matter altogether different, to the means which it may please God to use in bringing men to the belief of Christianity; and here, I presume, there will be no controversy: for whether we should hold, that he withdrew from his servants the power of working miracles at an earlier or at a later period, still “the hand of the Almighty is not shortened.”

One more passage from the works of Origen shall be produced: although expressed in general terms, it is connected with what has been already quoted of the works of that author. “Signs of the Holy Spirit were shewn when Jesus began to teach, more numerous after his ascension, and in succeeding times less numerous. But even at this day, there are traces of it in a few men, who have had their

“souls cleansed by the Word, and a corresponding behaviour *.”

Eusebius began to write about fifty years after the death of Origen; and, according to his account, evil spirits were wont to be expelled even in those times †. But I have not been able to discover that Eusebius speaks of himself as an eye-witness of such facts.

In another passage he observes, that “the evidences of divinity in Jesus Christ, are tried and proved among us even by other glaring matters of fact, exceeding all power of words, where our Lord himself, even at this day, is wont to manifest some portions of his power, though but small, in those whom he thinks proper for it ‡.”

* Σημεία δὲ τὰ ἁγία πνεύματος κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν τῆς Ἰησοῦ διδασκαλίας, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀναλήψιν αὐτοῦ πλείονα ἐδείκνυντο, ὑψέρον δὲ ἐλαττονα. πλὴν καὶ νῦν ἐτι ἰχνη εἰσὶν αὐτοῦ παρ' ὀλίγοις, τὰς ψυχὰς τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ταῖς κατ' αὐτὸν πράξεσι κικαθαριμένοις. *Contra Celsum*, l. vii. p. 337.

† Euseb. *Demonst. Evangel.* l. iii. p. 91. edit. Stephani.

‡ Ταῦτα τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ Θεοῦ λόγος τὰ τεκμήρια——ἐζητάσαι παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ βεβαιωταῖς καὶ δι' ἐτέρων πραγμάτων ἐναργῶν πάντα καλυπτοντῶν λόγον, δι' ὃν αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν εἰσεῖται καὶ νῦν, οἷς ἂν κρίνειεν μικρὰ τινὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ δυνάμεως παραφαίνειν εἰωθε. *Euseb. Demonst. Evangel.* l. iii. p. 71. I have used the version of Dr Chapman, *Notes on the Charge*, p. 57. omitting, however, his gloss, “small, comparatively,” as not warranted by the text.

These expressions are so general, that we cannot, with certainty, determine, whether they relate to the expulsion of evil spirits, the seeing of visions, or the curing of diseases.

It should seem that, in the days of Eusebius, there were fewer pretensions to miraculous gifts and powers among the Christians than there were in the days of Origen.

Eusebius, as an eye-witness, has pathetically described the long and grievous persecution of the Christians in Palestine ; yet he speaks not of any miracle ever wrought by any of those Martyrs ; and he does not speak even of visions seen, or of prophecies uttered by them *.

* Concerning Polycarp the church in Smyrna thus speaks : “ While he prayed, three days before “ he was apprehended, he beheld, *in a vision*, his “ pillow consumed by flames ; and turning to those “ who were with him, he said, *in the spirit of prophecy*, “ It behoves me to be burnt alive.” — He was one “ *endued with the spirit of prophecy* ; for every “ word which he uttered has already been, or will be “ hereafter fulfilled.” Remains of Christian Antiquity, vol. i. p. 7. p. 20.

And to the same purpose, the churches of Lyons and Vienne speak of Alexander, a martyr from Phrygia. “ He was universally known for his love “ towards God, and his boldness in proclaiming the “ Word ; and *he was not without a portion of apostolical grace*,” ib. p. 54. : and the same churches speak of a *revelation* made to Attalus, another martyr, ib. p. 68.

Virtuous friendship for the sufferers, and zeal for the cause in which they suffered, might have led Eusebius, on slight evidence, to give some degree of credit to popular rumours, had there been any such, tending to increase the fame of the Martyrs; yet nothing of that nature is to be found in his work; and this is the more remarkable, because at that time there prevailed an opinion among the Christians in Palestine, that Providence interposed, by signs

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, treating of the Decian persecution, says, "I declare before God, and he knows that I lie not, never did I of my own accord, and *without a divine impulse*, [~~ex~~ *αθεῖς*] take flight." Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. vi. c. 40.

Fructuosus, Bishop of Tarracona in Spain, when about to be burnt alive, "*through the admonition of the Holy Spirit* thus spake: There will not be wanting a pastor among you: for the loving kindness of the Lord shall never fail; and *that* which ye now behold, seemeth but as the tribulation of one hour." Remains of Christian Antiquity, vol. ii. p. 42.

It was *foreshewn* to Cyprian, that he should be taken into custody, and beheaded. Remains of Christian Antiquity, vol. ii. p. 29. 112.

I do not pretend to determine any thing as to the nature of the visions and prophetic gifts mentioned in this note: my only purpose is to contrast the particulars related of former martyrs with the narrative of Eusebius concerning the Martyrs of Palestine.

and wonders, to confer an awful dignity on the sufferings and death of the Martyrs.

To this purpose Eusebius speaks, “ I doubt
“ not that the things which ensued will appear
“ incredible to every one, excepting eye-witnes-
“ ses ; yet must I needs record them ; and *this*
“ the rather, because almost the whole inhabi-
“ tants of Cæsarea, young and old, beheld the
“ astonishing sight.”

“ When the Heathens imagined that they
“ had sunk this holy and most blessed youth in
“ the unfathomable deep, at once there arose a
“ mighty noise ; and the sea and the air were
“ agitated ; and the whole city of Cæsarea, and
“ the neighbouring country, trembled ; and, at
“ this sudden and strange event, the sea, as if
“ unable to bear the corpse of the divine martyr,
“ cast it out before the gates of the city *.”

And again, “ There ensued this wonderful
“ event : While the sky was pure and bright,
“ and an universal serenity prevailed in the fir-
“ mament, on a sudden, most of the pillars
“ which upheld the porticoes in the city, sent
“ forth drops resembling tears ; and, notwith-
“ standing there had been no dew from the air,
“ the market-places and the streets became wet,
“ I know not how, as if besprinkled with water :

* Mart. Palest. c. iv.

“ and forthwith it was a saying repeated among
“ all, that the earth wept in this inexplicable
“ manner, as if it could not brook such impiety ;
“ and that, to the reproach of men inexorable
“ and void of sympathy, stones and inanimate
“ matter mourned for the deeds which were
“ done.”

“ This relation, I doubt not, will be viewed
“ in the light of a vain and idle tale by those
“ who come after us, but not so by our con-
“ temporaries, to whom the recentness of the
“ event vouches its reality *.”

It was no prodigy, that a dead body, sunk in the sea without any weights fixed to it, should have been thrown on shore by a violent gust of wind ; or that, while the sky seemed clear and serene, the air should have proved moist, and the ground become damp † ; and yet we see what impression such incidents made on the minds of the inhabitants of Palestine in general, and even on Eusebius, a person not so credulous as some authors have supposed him ‡ ;

* Mart. Palest. c. ix.

† This subject is examined at greater length in *Remains of Christian Antiquity*, vol. iii. p. 29.—31. and p. 63.—67.

‡ For example, Dr Middleton observes, that Eusebius [*Hist. Eccles.* vi. 9.] makes mention of a miracle which Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, wrought, by converting water into oil, for the pur-

and therefore we may conclude, that if, during the course of a persecution of eight years, any

pose of supplying the church lamps on Easter eve, Inquiry, p. 127. The Doctor adds, " of which oil, " as Eusebius says, several small quantities were " preserved, by great numbers of the faithful, to his " time, which was about an hundred years after the " date of the miracle."

Here we may, in charity, presume, that Dr Middleton has been led into an error by not attending to the construction of a long period in Eusebius. The sense of the whole period depends on the word *φασι*, which is placed at the beginning of it. Eusebius, instead of saying any thing on his own authority, or from his own belief, only says that *men report* such and such circumstances. The historian himself appears to have been peculiarly attentive to make this important distinction: in order to mark the difference between his *own* assertion and the assertion of *others*, he multiplies words nearly synonymous [*ανημωνευσι, ισχυσι, φασι.*]

To prevent any mistake, Valesius, in his version, took the liberty of repeating a translation of the word *φασι*, although but once mentioned in the original.

Notwithstanding all this precaution, Dr Middleton, when quoting the Greek of Eusebius, overlooked the unlucky word *φασι*, once used by the historian, and the same word *twice* translated by his interpreter; and hence he has produced the following maimed and imperfect sentence, [*παρα δε πλοις των αδελφων επι μηκισον εξ εκεινις και εις ημας βραχυ τι δειγμα τε τοτε θανματος φυλαχθηναι.*]

Eusebius mentions the story as a tradition, [*ως εκ παραδοσεως των κατα διαδοχην αδελφων*]; but there is no cause for supposing that he himself believed it.

of the Martyrs in Palestine had wrought miracles, or seen visions, or uttered prophecies,

Many authors, in relating matters of dubious credit, use a like preamble ; “ there is a tradition,” “ it is “ reported,” or, “ they say.” How hard the state of such authors, were they to be held as vouchers for the truth of every such tradition, report, and story, and then, on that account, to be vilified and insulted !

Upon the authority of others, Eusebius often relates things which he either doubted or disbelieved ; and there are who think, that he might, with better judgement, have omitted such things altogether. But if he had omitted them, and if other books, containing those stories of dubious credit, had been saved from the wreck of time, then we should have heard, “ that Eusebius industriously omitted every “ circumstance tending to shew the fictions of some “ of the primitive Christians, and the credulity of “ others.”

To turn water into oil, for supplying the church-lamps on Easter-eve, would have been a miracle not foretold by our Lord ; neither would it have established the truth of his divine mission : at the same time it might have served to foster superstitious prejudices in those weak Christians who appear to have dreaded, as an unlucky omen, the extinction of the lamps at that season.

A miracle not foretold, bearing no signs of any useful tendency, and capable of producing dangerous consequences, ought not to be credited on a *traditionary say* ; and *this* more especially in the present case ; for what is said to have been done *once* by Narcissus, is said to have been done *often* under the administration of Jesuit missionaries in the East Indies. Amongst the *Epigrammata Sacra* of Igna-

Eusebius would not have passed them over in silence.

Christianity was established by law not many years after that persecution. Then, indeed, a new and a very different scene opened, of which something will be said hereafter.

Mr Gibbon concludes his observations on the *third* secondary cause of the rapid progress of Christianity, by stating certain difficulties, which deserve our attention.

His *first* difficulty is expressed in the following words: "Every age bears testimony to the wonderful events by which it was distinguished, and its testimony appears no less weighty and respectable than that of the preceding generation, till we are insensibly led on to accuse our own inconsistency, if, in the eighth or in the twelfth century, we deny to the *venerable* Bede or the *holy* Bernard the same degree of confidence which, in the second century, we had so liberally granted to Justin and Irenæus *."

tius Dickerus, ii. 62. this title occurs, "Lampades S. Francisco Xaverio, apud Indos accensæ, *fre-quenter* sola aqua nutriuntur." Narcissus eked out his oil with water; but, in more modern times, pure water served every purpose of oil.

* To this there is subjoined a query, [note 81.] "In the long series of ecclesiastical history, does there exist a single instance of a saint asserting that he himself possessed the gift of miracles?"

If, all circumstances considered, what Bede relates of Cuthbert, and Bernard of Malachi,

If, under the phrase, "ecclesiastical history," the history of the New Testament be comprehended, every one acquainted with the Scriptures can decidedly answer this acute query in the affirmative.

Mr Gibbon, probably, meant to except the apostolical times from this query; but as his words are wide enough to comprehend them also, it may be fit to observe, that St Matthew asserts, that "he himself possessed the gift of miracles;" for he thus speaks: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, *he gave them power* over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;" chap. x. 1. Here he asserts that Jesus bestowed the gift of miracles on the twelve Apostles; and presently after, while recounting their names, he mentions himself as one of that chosen number; so he must have *possessed* that gift of miracles which Jesus *bestowed* on him.

Again, St Paul positively asserts, that "he himself possessed the gift of miracles;" for he thus speaks: "I am become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, *in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*;" 2 Cor. xii. 11. 12. Mr Anthony Collins is reported to have said, "I think so well of St Paul, who was both a man of sense and a gentleman, that if he had asserted that he had wrought miracles himself, I would have believed him;" Biographia Britannica, v. i. p. 626. not. G, 2d edit. This anecdote, if authentic, proves, that

be no less credible than what Justin M. * and Irenæus relate of miraculous powers in their own times, we ought not to deny them the same degree of confidence. But, before coming to that conclusion, it is fit that we should make ourselves acquainted with the nature of the stories related by Bede and Bernard.

Bede relates the following stories of Cuthbert. He had sown some corn, and when it sprung up, and was in the ear, birds began to peck at it. He thus mildly addressed the birds : “ Why are ye so unjust, as to reap where ye “ did not sow ? Are ye poorer than I am ? If “ ye have a commission from Heaven to plun- “ der me, I submit ; but if not, leave my terri- “ tory.” The birds immediately flew away, and never returned.—Some crows who, probably, had not been present at Cuthbert’s re-

Mr Collins, although one of the shrewdest adversaries of Christianity, had read the epistles of St Paul with little attention. The gift of miracles, of which I have been speaking, must be distinguished from the other divine gifts bestowed on the Apostles, and frequently alluded to by them ; as in 1 Pet. i. 12. ; John vii. 39. ; xx. 22. ; Apoc. i. 10. &c. ; 1 Cor. xiv. 18. ; 2 Cor. vi. 6. 7. ; and in many other passages.

* Justin M. is mentioned here, because Mr Gibbon mentions him ; yet there is hardly any thing in the works of Justin M. which relates to a power of working miracles bestowed on any individual in the Christian church.

monstrance, plucked straw out of the thatch of his monastery, in order to make their nests; Cuthbert pronounced sentence of perpetual banishment against them: they departed very sad; but after two days, a crow returned, and throwing itself at the feet of the prophet, and sorrowfully fluttering with its wings, seemed to crave forgiveness; and, at the same time, presented him with a piece of hog's lard to grease his brogues. From that time the crows ceased to molest the thatch of the monastery in Lindisfarne. Thus far the *venerable* Bede, who has not explained how the penitent crow should have thought of presenting *stolen* goods to the saint by way of atonement for *robbery*.

Of the *holy* Bernard, as Mr Gibbon inclines to call him, I am not the apologist. Should we hold him to have been an honest man, we must acknowledge that he was an extravagant fanatic; and yet, in candour, it ought to be observed, that Bernard does not, on his own knowledge, relate even a single miracle supposed to have been wrought by Malachi. His credulity and his admiration of a stranger monk may have led him to believe reports which were partly fabulous, and partly exaggerated.

Indeed it may be doubted, whether a Roman Catholic of our times would hold himself under any obligation to believe whatever Bernard has

said ; for example, Walteof, afterwards Abbot of Melros, wished to accommodate Malachi with a horse, but the only one which he could bestow, had a very hard trot. Malachi, however, accepted of the present, such as it was, and said, that in time the horse would answer his purpose. He rode it for nine years, and it proved an excellent pad. So far goes the miraculous change of the Baron's trotting horse into a pacer, for the accommodation of the itinerant monk ; and so far alone is Malachi concerned in the miracle. Bernard, however, adds, " That which made the miracle more manifest to beholders, was, that the horse, originally of a blackish colour or irongrey, [subniger], began to grow white, and that, not long after, there was scarcely one whiter to be seen." The miracle would have been still more manifest to beholders, had the horse, originally white, become, in process of time, blackish or irongrey.

At a time when the honest Irish priests believed, that during the twelve days obsequies of St Patrick the sun never set *, the successive miracles wrought on the pad of Malachi might have found reasonable credit.

* *Messingham. Florilegium Insulæ Sanctorum*, fol. b. 1.

But whatever may be the case as to Roman Catholics, it is supposed that Protestants will hardly *accuse themselves of inconsistency*, when, admitting the evidence of miracles in the *second* century, they doubt whether, in the *twelfth*, Malachi inflicted a mortal disease on his unfortunate countryman, whom he could not, *by argument*, convince of *the Real Presence*.

There are some singular circumstances in the miraculous works performed by this saint. Even as Bernard relates them, they were not always, like those in Scripture, instantaneous. On the contrary, the sick person did not recover till a day or two after he had been visited by Malachi. The cures, in particular, which he wrought on lunatics, are very problematical ; for his patients sometimes relapsed, and became as mad as ever.

According to Bernard, the greatest of all the miracles of Malachi was the cure of an inveterate scold : but one is tired of such trifling.

The *second* difficulty, stated by Mr Gibbon, is in these words : “ Since every friend to revelation is persuaded of the reality, and every reasonable man is convinced of the cessation of miraculous powers, it is evident that there must have been *some period* in which they were either suddenly or gradually withdrawn from the Christian church. Whatever æra

“ is chosen for that purpose, the death of the
 “ Apostles, the conversion of the Roman em-
 “ pire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy,
 “ the insensibility of the Christians who lived
 “ at that time will equally afford a just matter
 “ of surprise. They still supported their pre-
 “ tensions, after they had lost their power.
 “ Credulity performed the office of faith;
 “ fanaticism was permitted to assume the lan-
 “ guage of inspiration; and the effects of ac-
 “ cident or contrivance were ascribed to super-
 “ natural causes;” i. 570.

By “ conversion of the Roman empire,” Mr Gibbon means “ the conversion of Constantine
 “ the Great to the Christian faith *.”

One of the æras assigned for the cessation of miraculous powers, is, *that* of “ the extinction
 “ of the Arian heresy.” But there seems no better reason for chusing it than there would be for chusing another, mentioned by Whiston in one of his rhapsodies, the æra of the Council of Nice, when, to use his own language, the *Eusebians* were overborne by the *Athanasians*.

Mr Gibbon says, that “ every reasonable

* This appears from note 82.; the expression, however, is inaccurate; for Mr Gibbon might have recollected, that Constantine, by embracing Christianity, and making it the religion of the state, did not convert the Roman empire from Paganism.

“man is convinced of the cessation of miraculous powers.” By “miraculous powers,” it is presumed that he means “a power of working miracles, bestowed either on individuals or on the Christian church.” Yet while we acknowledge the cessation of such power, we must be careful to distinguish it from the occasional interposition of the Divinity in the working of miracles: for *his* operations are not to be limited by the presumptuous wisdom of his creatures. This is a proposition which cannot be too frequently inculcated.

It is observed by Mr Gibbon, that the *insensibility* of the Christians who lived at the time, whatever it was, when miraculous powers were withdrawn, affords a just matter of surprise; because “*they* [the Christians] still supported their pretensions after they had lost their power.”

If Mr Gibbon intended to say, that the *same* Christians who had lost the power of working miracles, still supported their pretensions to that power, he has been exceedingly unfortunate in his application of the word *insensibility* to such men *.

* Were an apothecary, on his stock of Peruvian bark being exhausted, to make up doses of oak bark for his customers, we should charge him with *fraud*, not with *insensibility*.

I cannot discover any circumstance in ecclesiastical history which tends to show that a Christian was ever deprived of miraculous gifts and powers, and yet continued to support his pretensions to them : If I am right in this, the case put by Mr Gibbon is merely ideal.

It is proper also to observe, that they who, like Mr Gibbon, limit the miraculous gifts and powers to the apostolical times, do not hold that St John, who probably outlived the other Apostles, did exercise them all until the very last hour of his life ; and that they who suppose them to have been continued, either wholly or in part, until the conversion of Constantine the Great, and the civil establishment of Christianity, do not affirm that they were exercised until the moment at which the Emperor was converted, or Christianity became the religion of the state.

Hence it might well happen, that no men who had been spectators of a miracle, wrought, for instance, in the healing of a disease, were ever spectators of a feigned cure : and this may serve to shew, that Mr Gibbon too hastily takes it for granted, that Christians, at the cessation of miracles, had an opportunity of comparing real with fictitious miracles, and yet could not discern any difference between them.

That we may view the subject of Mr Gibbon's difficulty in a fuller light, let us suppose, as is

most probable, that the miraculous gifts and powers were withdrawn, not *at once*, but *gradually*, that is, successively, or, one after another.

The reader has already perused an argument attempting to shew, that, in all likelihood, the power of resuscitating the dead, and the gift, called in Scripture “the discerning of spirits,” were not continued after the apostolical times, p. 95.—98. p. 103.—105.; that the evidence of the gift of tongues having been continued after the apostolical times, and until the second century, rests on a single and unsatisfactory passage in the writings of Irenæus*, p. 99.—103.; that, in the second century, if not sooner, the gift of prophecy, or of interpreting the Scriptures of the Old Testament, of applying them to the events of evangelical history, and of foretelling.

* Eusebius says, that Irenæus “points out the “marks of a divine and wonderful power left, *even unto his times*, in certain churches;” Hist. Eccles. l. v. c. 7. [οἱ δὲ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ὑποδείγματα τῆς θείας καὶ παραδόξης δυναμέως ἐν ἐκκλησίαις τισὶν ὑπολείπειτο.] This seems to imply, that, in the opinion of Eusebius, there had been some sensible diminution of miraculous gifts and powers between the apostolical age and the time at which Irenæus wrote. There is a considerable chasm in the next paragraph, which may be supplied from the old Latin version of Irenæus; Adv. hæres, l. ii. c. 56. Valesius has overlooked this.

the fates of the church, was withdrawn, p. 105. 106 ; and that, even in the earlier part of the third century, there was hardly any thing left which, in propriety of speech, could be termed a miraculous communication afforded in the way of vision to the Christians, p. 139.

With respect to the miraculous gifts and powers hitherto mentioned, the conduct of the Christians at large was precisely what might have been expected from men of integrity, candour, and plain understanding. Whenever they saw that such gifts and powers were withdrawn, they no longer supposed them to exist. This appears from the general language and conduct of the Christian apologists : While they assert the existence of some miraculous gifts and powers, they are silent as to others ; such as, the power of resuscitating the dead, the gift of tongues, and the gift of discerning of spirits.

The Christians who lived at the time of the civil establishment of Christianity were not eye-witnesses of such miraculous gifts and powers as had ceased two hundred years or even hundred years before ; so, to that case at least, the observation of Mr Gibbon will not apply, that “ the recent experience of genuine miracles “ should have instructed the Christian world in “ the ways of Providence, and habituated their “ eye (if we may use a very inadequate expres-

“sion) to the style of the divine artist ;” i. 571.

But although many of the miraculous gifts and powers ceased long before the civil establishment of Christianity, there is very probable, if not complete evidence, and especially from the writings of Origen, that, even in the earlier part of the third century, the Christians cured various diseases by prayer, and without any human means ; and that they relieved persons who appeared to be under the dominion of evil spirits.

It may be admitted, that the evidence of such cures is not so full and satisfactory as that on which we believe the truth of cures performed in the apostolical age ; and it may also be admitted, that *some* of the persons said to have been relieved from evil spirits, were, in truth, relieved from lunacy and other natural diseases.

Such appears to me to have been the state of the miraculous gifts and powers in the earlier part of the third century. When Eusebius wrote, not long before the civil establishment of Christianity, they were much diminished, as we have already seen, p. 143.—150. and what remained was “the manifestation of *some small* portions of the divine power.”

One should have conjectured that the miraculous gifts and powers which, between the apostolical age and the days of Origen, had

perceptibly decreased, and had decreased still farther when Eusebius wrote, would have disappeared when Christianity, having overcome its adversaries, became the religion of the state.

Yet, if we may credit the accounts of some historians, the very reverse was the case ; and the divine power was manifested with more abundant light, and with a greater diversity of wonders, in the reign of Constantine and his children, than while St Peter, St Paul, and St John remained upon earth.

Every learned reader will perceive that I allude chiefly to the life of Antony, the Egyptian Anchorite, written by Athanasius, a portentous work, the life of an illiterate fanatic, and one who gloried in his ignorance of letters, drawn up, for the most part, from very insufficient hearsay, by the ablest Doctor of his age*.

* Some Protestant writers, eager to maintain the fame of Athanasius, have doubted whether “ the life of Antony,” as we now have it, be the work of that eminently great man ; and what thanks have they received for their pious attempt ? They have been reviled by the writers of another persuasion, no less than if they had been the inventors or propagators of some new and pestilent heresy. Rosweid says, “ Prefractor et magis effrons incedit Rodolphus Hospinianus ; d. Orig. Monach. iii. 1. Et cum eo Abraham Scultetus, Medulla Theol. Patrum, part ii. qui ausi asserere, scriptum hoc quod hodie

In the fourth century the hermits of Egypt became famous. The Christians who lived in

“ sub Athanasii nomine circumfertur, nullam prorsus fidem mereri, imo insulsi hominis commentum esse——vide lector, quid de emedullata illa *Meddulla* Sculteti, quid de monachatu seu moechatu Hospiniani tibi promittere debeas.” Rosweid, *vitæ Patrum*, in *vitam Antonii*. notatio, p. 31. I should wish to share in the abuse poured out against Hospinianus, Scultetus and other Protestant writers : but I cannot see evidence sufficient to clear Athanasius from the charge of writing this silly and most contemptible book. It is to be wished that some man of learning and candour would examine the life of Antony with care, and communicate the result of his inquiries to the public. In particular, it may be worth his pains to fix, if possible, the time at which Antony, having been suspected of Arianism, came down to Alexandria from his cell in Upper Egypt, for justifying himself, and also to determine whether Athanasius was at that time in Alexandria, as seems to be insinuated, c. 41. 43. It will also be fit to inquire, whether the prophecy as to the restoration of the orthodox church, c. 51. be spoken of as a prophecy fulfilled ; and whether it was actually fulfilled between the year of our Lord 359, when Antony died, and the year 371, when Athanasius died. Various other inquiries of the like nature will occur to him who sits down, without passion or prejudice, to try, by criticism, this simple issue, “ Did Athanasius write the life of Antony, or did he not ?”

Meanwhile, it may be fit to observe, that the author of the life of Antony does not inform his readers what part of the book it is for the truth of which he vouches. He says, “ I have written *what*

society, and consorted with man, were astonished at the report of manners and institutions

“*I myself know, for I have often seen him, AND*
 “*what I could learn from one who had been an*
 “*attendant of his for no small space of time.*”

[ἀπὲρ αὐτοῦ τε γινώσκω, (πολλὰκις γὰρ αὐτὸν ἑώρακα), καὶ ὁ μαθεῖν ἠδυνήθην παρὰ τοῦ ἀκολουθεῦσά τοι αὐτῷ χρόνον οὐκ ὀλίγον.] Proem. ad Vitam Antonii.—Evagrius

improperly translates the word ἑώρακα by *visitavi*; and hence Cardinal Baronius, who knew no Greek, imagined that the writer of the life of Antony had visited him in the Egyptian deserts. He might have imagined, with equal reason, that the visits were frequent; for such is the force of the word *visitavi*. But as nothing of all this appears, it follows, that every thing respecting what happened in the desert, is related on the sole authority of the attendant. Now, as to events which happened after Antony left the castle, [see p. 168.] the attendant must have received part of his information from others, unless he had served Antony for *fifty* years; and with respect to more distant events, he must have reported them all on the credit of the superannuated old man.

The writer of the life, having often seen Antony, could give a just description of his figure and demeanour. What he saw of his wonders, is related in a hasty, and no very credible manner; for example, it is said, that Pagans, and the priests of idols, crowded to see *the man of God*, as Antony was universally denominated, strove to touch the hem of his garment, and imagined that they received benefit from the touch, c. 42. 43.

Let me add, that the author of the life admits, in his introduction, that he wrote it in a hurry, and to satisfy the impatience of his correspondents,

so unlike their own. They found, that some persons had been banished into the deserts of Egypt by the persecuting Emperors; that others had fled thither to avoid persecution; and that many more, from diverse motives, had *associated* themselves, if that phrase may be allowed, with the banished and the fugitives, and had formed a system of government unlike any thing ever established by human or divine legislators. The attention with which they abstracted themselves from sublunary concerns, their singular contests with devils appearing in bodily shapes, their unexampled austerities, the visions said to have been seen, and the miracles said to have been wrought by them, all concurred in persuading many unwary Christians, that something strange and supernatural was manifested in the deserts of Egypt.

Antony, a person altogether illiterate *, was

without having time to make proper inquiries at the monks, and to receive their answers concerning Antony.

* Antony was an Egyptian of honourable birth. His parents put him to school, but he would never learn any thing; Athanas. vita Antonii, c. 1. This, which might have been termed obstinacy or stupidity in a boy, he justified when of riper years. "He neither knew letters, (says Sozomen), nor did he admire them; but he extolled *good sense*, as being more ancient than letters, and itself the inventor of them;" [*γρηγορία δὲ εἰς ἡπίστεον, εἰς θαυμάζον,*

the chief of the Egyptian *hermits, ascetics, or monks*; and that numerous fraternity seems to have looked on every divine grace, gift, and power, as concentrated in him. Before he came of age he disposed of all his possessions*, which

αλλα νεν αγαθον ὡς πρεσβυτερον των γραμματαυ, και αυτον τελων ευρεθην εφηνει.] i. 13. The same fanatical tenet is recorded, with much solemnity, by Athanasius, *vita Antonii*, c. 45. Here let it be observed, that in the life of this illiterate hermit, there occurs a sermon to his brethren in the desert, c. 15.—20.; and a discourse, addressed to some Heathen philosophers, on the vanity of Paganism, and the truth of the Christian religion, c. 46. 47. I cannot subscribe to the doctrines of the *sermon*, as when he says, that the devils have a *particular* ill-will to monks, and women devoted to a single life; that when devils appear *visibly*, they vanish on the sign of the cross being made; and I do not thoroughly understand the reasoning of the *discourse*, yet I must say, that if the sermon and the discourse be compositions of Antony, they exhibit a greater miracle than any recorded in his life; for they are composed altogether in the style of a rhetorician, and according to the rules of art. The knowledge of Antony in the mythology of the Heathens, and in the arts practised by learned men to veil the absurdities of that system, is indeed wonderful; one should be apt to suppose that Tertullian, Minucius Felix, or some learned Greek Father, was speaking, and not a hermit from Upper Egypt, who could not read, and who understood nought excepting his mother-tongue.

* On hearing *that* gospel read, “sell that thou hast,” &c. he sold his lands, and bestowed the price among the poor, and on hearing *that* other

appear to have been considerable, and began to earn a subsistence by manual labour. He afterwards betook himself to dwell *among the tombs* in the neighbourhood of Alexandria. The devil and his associates forced open the gate of Antony's habitation, assaulted and grievously wounded him, and left him half dead †. Before he was recovered enough to be able to stand upright, they came back in the shape of savage, fierce, and venomous animals, and

gospel read, "take no thought for to-morrow," &c. he sold his other effects, and distributed their value in like manner; Athanas. vita Antonii, c. 2. 3. Here, however, he was surpassed by another and less celebrated monk, who, having no property but a copy of the Gospels, disposed of the book, gave away its price in charity, and then exultingly cried, "I have sold that book which says, *sell all thou hast, and give to the poor*;" Socrates Scholasticus, v. 23.

† We must beware of understanding this in a spiritual sense. Antony was *literally* beat to the effusion of his blood; and he was gored by the devil in the likeness of a bull. He often related the story to his brethren in the desert, and averred that the wounds inflicted on his body were exceedingly grievous and painful; Vita Antonii, c. 7. Perhaps, after all, the story may have been true, and the evil spirit and his fellows may have been represented, not unaptly, by some of the petulant and unfeeling rabble of Alexandria, who took a barbarous pleasure in abusing a poor creature, half crazed with fanaticism and abstinence.

wounded him anew with inexpressible cruelty*.

At the age of thirty-five he retired up the country, and dwelt in different places of the Egyptian deserts for seventy years.

He first took possession of an uninhabited castle ; and, having laid in a store of biscuit for six months, he shut himself up from all converse with mankind. His friends and admirers took care, at stated times, to supply him with provisions, such as he had chosen for himself ; and they let down his pittance through the roof of the castle ; but he would never shew himself, or converse with them. Having lived for twenty years after this singular fashion, he came forth, expelled evil spirits, cured diseases, and assiduously preached up a monastic life.

Antony hearing of the persecution at Alexandria, repaired thither, with the view of suffering martyrdom : but although he affected to appear in public, he was totally disregarded by the Heathen magistrate ; and while Peter

* This story is better known than any of the other adventures of Antony ; for the comic painters in Roman-Catholic countries have been permitted, I know not why, to make it the subject of many grotesque pieces. I dare not repeat the conference which Antony is said to have had with our Lord ; and it seems superfluous to repeat the conversations which he held with the devil on the subject of those assaults and batteries, and also when he was tempted in a form less terrific, but not less dangerous.

Bishop of Alexandria, and many other eminent persons, were apprehended and put to death, Antony was allowed to go about unmolested, and at large * : so he returned to the desert, and began to practise greater austerities. He put on a haircloth, and ever after abstained from bathing his body, or even washing his feet.

Various and extraordinary were the things which happened to him in the desert. At one time, the devil appeared to him in the likeness of an animal, neither centaur nor minotaur, but half-man, half-ass. Antony made the sign of the cross ; the monster run away, fell, and was killed †.

At another time he was carried up into the air by angels. The devils met him, and demanded how he came *there*, being a sinner ? The angels defied the devils to prove that An-

* Vita Antonii, c. 23. This was in the ninth year of the last persecution, A. D. 311. when Maximin Daia beheaded Peter Bishop of Alexandria, Euseb. Hist. Eccles. vii. 32. viii. 13. ix. 6. The safety of Antony has been ascribed to some miraculous interposition in his favour. But, perhaps, his character was not so thought of at Alexandria as in the desert ; and an illiterate layman, who could not have been tried without an interpreter, might well have escaped in the multitude.

† Vita Antonii, c. 26.

tony had ever committed sin from the hour that he became a monk. Notwithstanding all their malice, the devils could not make good their charge *. This was transacted in a vision ; but it was not a vision of humility ; and it only tends to prove, that a monk may be without sin, whereas laymen and the secular clergy offend daily.

He saw the soul of Ammon, a brother monk, conveyed to heaven by angels ; and then, although Ammon resided at the distance of thirteen days journey from him, he instantly told the precise hour of his death †.

A quality he had much resembling that which, in our days, is called *the second sight*. At the distance of a day's journey he perceived a monk perishing with thirst in the wilderness, and he sent timely relief to him. There are other instances of the like nature given by his historian ‡.

To all which it may be added, that Antony discovered, by the smell, a devil lurking in the body of a man ; and that, on a certain occasion, he twice crossed the canal at Arsinoe, without being devoured by crocodiles ||.

* Vita Antonii, c. 37. † Ib. c. 32.

‡ Ib. c. 31. 34. 38. || Ib. c. 35. c. 14.

From this specimen of the wonders said to have been wrought towards the middle of the fourth century, we may learn, that if, at that time, the Christians, in general, gave credit to them, it was not by reason of any *insensibility* which hindered them from distinguishing between real miracles and fallacious wonders; but it was because they trusted too much to reports never tried by the standard of moral evidence.

It is probable that the adventures of Antony, his miracles, and his strange visions, would not have found much credit, had they not been connected with an opinion, which began to be entertained, of the transcendent sanctity of a monastic life, and of the persons who devoted themselves to it.

I doubt, however, as to their general reception when they were first promulgated; for Antony is said to have declared himself the enemy of Arianism, and to have pronounced it to be the forerunner of Antichrist, and the *last*, that is, the worst and the greatest *heresy**; and it cannot be supposed, that the Arians, at that time a numerous and powerful body, would have yielded implicit faith to the eventful histo-

* Vita Antonii, c. 41. Little did Antony know that a worse and a greater error was afterwards to arise concerning the nature of our Lord.

ry of an orthodox monk, and especially if his historian was Athanasius : we might as well suppose that the orthodox believed in the miracles of Agapetus, the Arian Bishop of Synnada, who, surpassing Antony, not only drove diseases away, but also raised men from the dead *.

Indeed, before the conclusion of the fourth century, men were willing to believe every wonderful tale calculated to enforce veneration for a monastic life, and to confirm the popular sentiments as to the sanctity of those who professed it. Evidence and probability seem to have been no longer regarded, and the hearsay stories disseminated, by travellers of all denominations, concerning things *done in a corner*, obtained easy credit with prejudiced and superstitious auditors.

In this view, let us examine some of the miracles said to have been wrought by Macarius, surnamed *the Egyptian*.

He appears to have been the hermit of most eminence after the death of Antony. At the age of thirty he betook himself to the desert ; and, after having resided there for sixty years, he died, [A. D. 391.]

* Philostorgius, ii. 8. Suidas, on the authority of one Thalassius, says, that another Arian Bishop, Theophilus, restored a dead person to life.

In the year after Macarius died, Palladius, a personage well known by the writings of Jerom, visited the desert, with the purpose of collecting wonders for the edification of the civilized world; and it must be acknowledged that his journey was prosperous.

Among others, he found, as he says, the following story. A leud Egyptian attempted in vain to debauch a matron of virtuous character. Irritated at this, he got a magician to transform her into a mare. The disconsolate husband led his mare to Macarius, who sprinkled her head with consecrated water, and restored her original shape. “Go in peace, (said Macarius to the “woman); but remember henceforth to be “more circumspect; for your omission to com- “municate during five weeks, was the cause of “the metamorphosis *.”

Palladius adds, that it was the constant talk in the desert, that Macarius raised a man from the dead, in order to confute a heretic who disbelieved the resurrection of the body †.

Rufinus, on visiting the desert, gleaned abundantly after Palladius.

Instead of relating the story of the matron transformed into a mare, he says, that there was a girl whom her relations imagined to have

* Palladii Lausiaca, c. 19.

† Ib. c. 20.

been so transformed, although the girl herself asserted the contrary. Macarius anointed *her* with oil, and then her *relations* saw that the supposed metamorphosis was a magical delusion *.

He next mentions a complicated miracle indeed, by which a diseased little girl was changed into a healthy man †.

Again, there chanced to be found in the desert a dead body, bearing marks of violence. A person was taken up, on suspicion, as the murderer. Macarius asked the dead man, whether that person was guilty? "I was murdered," (said the dead man), but not by him." The brethren pressed Macarius to ask *who* committed the murder. "No, (answered he); it is enough that I clear the innocent: it is not my office to convict the guilty: perhaps the murderer may yet be struck with compunction, and repent, to the saving of his soul ‡."

* Rufini vitæ Patrum, l. 2. c. 28.

† Rufin. ib. A Roman author speaks of the north as being "*officina gentium*:" the desert of Egypt might, with equal reason, have been termed "*officina miraculorum*."

‡ Rufin. vitæ Patrum, l. 2. c. 28. & iii. 41. This is dangerous casuistry indeed! Rufinus elsewhere speaks of some heterodox opinions which a human scull uttered in the course of conversation with Ma-

Rufinus also gives a second and improved edition of the story in Palladius, concerning the man who was brought back to life, that a heretic might be persuaded of the resurrection of the body. The heretic was of the sect of the

carius, l. iii. § 172. Here Rosweid himself hesitates, and adds on the margin, "SANE hæc intelligenda." [These things must be understood in a sound sense.] This might have been the *running title* of his book.

I cannot quit this subject without mentioning what is said by the English translator of the Homilies ascribed to Macarius *the Egyptian*. His words are : "To come now to what is most material, what completes his other miracles, and proves him *beyond dispute a man of God*, i. Kings, xvii. 24. it is upon record, that he even raised the dead to life. Once, indeed, it was to silence an *Hieracite* that had given no little disturbance to the brethren, by the artifice of his discourse ; and at another is he reported to have raised one from the dead, to convince an *heretic* of the *resurrection* of the *body* ; nor was this ever contradicted or endeavoured to be stifled in the desert," Introduction, § 5. p. 14. That this precious morsel of antiquity might appear to better advantage, two miracles are made out of one : for it is plain that Palladius and Rufinus speak of the same story. A thing mentioned by them can hardly be said to be *upon record* ; and as for the monks, they kept no record of miracles ; but, on the contrary, delivered them down from one to another by *unwritten tradition*. [διαδοχὴ παραδοσιῶς ΑΓΓΛΩΝ.] Sozom. l. i. c. 14. I admit, however, that they did not *stifle* them in the desert : *that* would have been *unnatural*.

Hieracita, who are supposed to have denied that tenet. He had frequently disputed with Macarius on the subject; when at length the saint said, "Let *his* faith be held right who can first "recall a dead man to life." The heretic, who denied the resurrection of the body, accepted this singular challenge, and desired Macarius to begin. He instantly performed the miracle. The astonished heretic run off, and all the brethren pursuing him, drove him out of the country *.

Perhaps I have spoken too diffusely of the *third* of those secondary causes to which the rapid progress of Christianity is ascribed by Mr Gibbon. But the subject is both intricate and momentous, and not the less so from the manner in which he has happened to treat it.

Let me conclude with observing, that *real* miracles cannot properly be ranged among the secondary causes on which Mr Gibbon descants: for, among the primary causes of the *victory* obtained by *the Christian faith over the established religions of the earth*, he reckons *the ruling providence of its great Author*. Now, the bestowing of miraculous powers and gifts by Christ and the Holy Spirit, must, in Mr Gibbon's account, be an interposition of that ruling Providence,

* Rufin. l. ii. c. 28.

and, consequently, a primary cause of the rapid progress of Christianity.

As to *fictitious* miracles, Mr Gibbon has not asserted, and I hope he did not mean to assert, that *they* were one of the secondary causes which made the Christian faith obtain victory over the established religions of the earth. But should any loose and unguarded phrases of his seem to have a tendency that way, it is to be presumed that, on a *serious* review of the argument, he will **BLOT THEM OUT.**

CHAPTER IV.

TO the virtues of the primitive Christians, the *fourth* cause of the rapid growth of Christianity is ascribed.

“The primitive Christian,” says Mr Gibbon, “demonstrated his faith by his virtues ; and it was *very justly supposed*, that the divine persuasion, which enlightened *or* subdued the understanding, must, at the same time, purify the heart, and direct the actions of the believer. The first apologists of Christianity, who justify the innocence of their brethren, —display, in the most lively colours, the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the gospel.” i. 572.

Here the virtues of the primitive Christians are acknowledged : It might, however, have been wished, that a less ambiguous phrase had been used than that of, “the divine persuasion which enlightened *or* subdued the understanding.” Every considerate reader will remark the singularity of the alternative. It is one of

the offices of the Holy Spirit, to “enlighten the understanding;” but to “subdue” it, is none of them, unless the word “understanding” be taken in a different sense when it is said to be “subdued,” than when it is said to be “enlightened.” Such change of terms, however allowable to rhetoricians, cannot be admitted in historical reasoning.

Mr Gibbon might have said, “the divine persuasion, which enlightened the understanding and subdued the will;” that is, the wayward propensities of human nature: these, undoubtedly, are the offices of the Holy Spirit.

But to proceed. Mr Gibbon concurs with St Paul in supposing that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering [patience], gentleness, goodness, faith [or faithfulness], meekness, temperance *;” and he even acknowledges the supposition to be *very just*.

And yet, instead of proceeding to show how the virtues of the primitive Christians tended to convert Heathens, or made *others to glorify their Father*, he at once deviates from his subject; and, if the phrase may be allowed, begins with a digression.

“As it is my intention,” says he, “to remark only such *human* causes as were permitted to

* Galat. v. 22. 23.

“ second the influence of revelation, I shall
“ slightly mention two *motives* which might *na-*
“ *turally* render the lives of the primitive Chri-
“ stians much purer and more austere than those
“ of their Pagan contemporaries,—Repentance
“ for past sins, and the laudable desire of sup-
“ porting the reputation of the society in which
“ they were engaged.”

Thus, instead of describing the *effects* which the virtues of the primitive Christians had in the converting of the Heathen world, Mr Gibbon favours us with a dissertation on the *causes* of those virtues.

He begins with two propositions, which are of great moment. The first is, That the primitive Christians were virtuous; and the second, That they were more virtuous than their Pagan contemporaries. These propositions will be admitted by all men who, like Mr Gibbon, are acquainted with the history of the primitive church, and with the tenets and manners of Paganism in the early times of Christianity.

But as some of the admirers of Mr Gibbon may chance to be less conversant in antiquity than he is, it will not be improper to fix in their minds *his* decided opinion, that THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS WERE VIRTUOUS, and that THEY WERE MORE VIRTUOUS THAN THEIR PAGAN CONTEMPORARIES.

Let us now follow Mr Gibbon in his digression, and inquire into the *natural motives* which impelled the Christians to be *more excellent than their neighbours*.

“ It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by
“ the *ignorance* or the *malice* of infidelity, that
“ the Christians allured into their party *the most*
“ *atrocious criminals*; who, as soon as they were
“ touched by a sense of remorse, were easily
“ persuaded to wash away, in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct; for
“ which the temples of the gods refused to grant
“ them any expiation;” i. 573.

In proof of this proposition, Celsus and Julian are quoted.

Julian, in his open, as well as in his more politic and covert attempts against Christianity, was *malicious*, but we cannot, with propriety, term him *ignorant*.

And the like may be observed as to Celsus; who, under the personated character of a Jew, misinterprets the Scriptures, and takes every advantage which the folly or fanaticism of Christian individuals afforded him.

This *personated character*, and these *little arts of controversy*, tend to show that he was not so much an *ignorant*, as a *malicious* enemy; and therefore, until some other evidence than that of Celsus and Julian be produced, “ the igno-

“ranchise of infidelity” seems out of the question.

Mr Gibbon says, “the *malice* of infidelity suggested, that the most atrocious criminals, “as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were *easily persuaded* to wash away, “in the water of baptism, a guilt for which the “temples of the gods refused to grant them any “expiation.”

That “the temples of the gods refused to “grant any expiation,” is a poetical phrase, importing, “that the ministers of the popular “religion amongst the Pagans *refused* to grant “that expiation to criminals, which the Christian teachers *persuaded* them to receive by “baptism.”

So scrupulous and severe were the Pagan priests, and on such easy terms might any one be admitted into the Christian church!

But *here*, as every one must perceive, the malicious infidels affected to be ignorant of the genius of Paganism*.

It is said, that “the most atrocious criminals “were easily persuaded to wash away their guilt “in the water of baptism.”

* It may be remarked, in passing, that the Greek *αῖμα*, and the Latin *piaculum*, mean *sin*, as well as *expiation for sin*.

Now, this implies, that, according to the principles of Christianity, the mere right of baptism had the singular virtue of washing away guilt ; and that the ministers of Christ did not require from their proselytes any belief of the Christian system, or any engagements to amend in future ; or, more briefly thus, that “ they held out baptism to be, in itself, a charm for the expiation of sins.”

Celsus, it is probable, knew, and without doubt Julian did, that this was precisely the reverse of what Christ and his apostles taught, and the discipline of the primitive church enforced.

Here we see *that* spirit which Mr Gibbon well terms “ the malice of infidelity.”

“ Baptism,” says Dr Bentley, “ is rallied as *mere washing* ; and repentance, as *thumping the breast*, or other outward grimace. The inward grace and the intrinsic change of mind are left out of the character. And *whom* are we to believe ? these Pagans, or our own selves ? Are we to fetch our notions of the sacraments from scraps of Julian and Celsus ? or from the Scripture, the pure fountain, and from what we read, know, and profess * ?”

* Remarks upon a late Discourse of Freethinking,
§ xliii.

These are obvious remarks ; but Mr Gibbon appears to have considered the subject in a more uncommon point of view ; for he says, “ This reproach, *when it is cleared from misrepresentation*, contributes as much to the honour as it did to the increase of the church *. The friends of Christianity may acknowledge, without a blush, that *many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners*. Those persons, who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence and propriety, derived such a calm satisfaction from the opinion of their own rectitude, as rendered them much less susceptible of the sudden emotions of shame, grief, and of terror, *which have given birth to so many wonderful conversions*. After the example of their divine Master, the missionaries of the gospel disdained not the society of men, and *especially of women*, oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects of their vices. As they emerged from sin and superstition, to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence. The desire of perfection

* The phrase is uncommon in modern language. *Reproach* is here used for the circumstance with which the primitive Christians were reproached.

“ became the ruling passion of their soul ; and
 “ *it is well known, that, while reason embraces a*
 “ *cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us, with ra-*
 “ *pid violence, over the space which lies between*
 “ *the most opposite extremes ;*” i. 573.

It is the purpose of Mr Gibbon, to “ clear
 “ the reproach from misrepresentation.” He
 begins by admitting the fact charged ; and, with
 a sort of conscious exultation, he adds, that
 “ *many of the most eminent saints [or Christians]*
 “ *were, before their baptism, the most abandoned*
 “ *sinner;*” and lest the fact should be disputed,
 he subjoins an elaborate argument, for proving
 that it must have been so from “ the reason of
 “ the thing.”

In this he is praise-worthy, that he begins
 with facts, and does not, like some theorists,
 first lay down “ the reason of the thing,” and
 then accommodate facts to it.

It is not absolutely certain, whether Mr Gib-
 bon here means to speak of Jewish or of Gen-
 tile converts ; I shall therefore take his words
 in their most extensive sense, as including
 both.

Celsus says, that the apostles were “ infamous
 “ persons, publicans, and boatmen, exceedingly
 “ wicked *.”

* Επιρρητης ανθρωπος, τελωνας, και ναυτας, της πονη-
 ροτατης. Celsus ap. Origen, l. i. p. 47. edit. Spencer.

Origen conjectures that this delineation of the manners of the first disciples is copied from a passage in the epistle that goes under the name of Barnabas, which says, “ Jesus selected for apostles, to preach his gospel, *men sinful above all other sinners*; that he might prove, that he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance *.”

This epistle was not written by Barnabas, the celebrated companion of St Paul; and indeed it is not mentioned by any Christian writer till near the close of the second century †.”

The assertion of this unknown author seems to have been grounded, not on any historical facts, but on an inference from that saying of Jesus, that “ he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” From this saying, imperfectly understood, the author of the epistle concluded, that as the apostles were call-

* Τῆς ἰδίας ἀποστολῆς, τῆς μελλόντας κηρύττειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον αὐτῶν ἐξελέξατο, ὄντας ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἁμαρτίαν ἀνομότερους· ἵνα δείξῃ ὅτι οὐκ ἦλθε καλεῖσθαι δίκαιους, ἀλλ’ ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν. § 5.

† The earliest mention of it is in the works of Clemens Alexandrinus. The earnestness with which Archbishop Wake endeavours to support the authority of this epistle is singular; Introduction to Apostolical Fathers, c. vii. Archbishop Laud was not so credulous; see his elegant letter to Father Menard, Patr. Apost. i. In. p. 20. edit. Russel.

ed in an especial manner, they must needs have been sinners above all others.

Here we may see an example of the sad consequences which the hasty and injudicious notions of our friends too often produce. Our adversaries, such as Celsus, being on the watch, lay hold of them, and turn them to their own purposes. The Evangelical History is open to all; and from that history alone can we learn, whether those who, in the first days of Christianity, acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah, were “most abandoned sinners.”

Among the first who witnessed this good confession was Simeon. All that we know of his character is, that he was “a man just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel *.”

The next is Anna, a woman indeed, but, with Mr Gibbon’s good leave, not “oppressed by the consciousness, and even effects of her vices.” “She was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she *was* a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day †.”

* δίκαιος και ευλαβής, προσδεχομενος παρακλησιν τῆς Ἰσραηλ. Luke ii. 25.

† Luke ii. 36. 37.

When Jesus chose Andrew, Peter, James, and John to be his apostles, he found them industriously occupied in their vocation of fishermen *. But neither on that occasion, nor on any other, do we see him addressing himself to them, as to men more sinful than the other inhabitants of Galilee. Sinners, no doubt, they were ; and even after they became the disciples of Jesus, they retained popular and national prejudices ; and it must be acknowledged, that their character does not come up to our idea of Christian perfection.

Matthew sat at the receipt of custom when Jesus called him †. The office of publican was in disrepute among the Jews ; yet we ought not from thence to suppose Matthew to have been a bad man, and much less “ a most abandoned sinner.” The office, however rapaciously exercised by many, was innocent in itself : and it is a just, although trite observation, that when publicans came to be baptised of John, and “ said unto him, Master, what shall we do ? he “ said unto them, Exact no more than that “ which is appointed you ‡ ;” but did not en-

* Matth. iv. 18,—22.

† Matth. ix. 9. Mark, ii. 14. Luke, v. 27. 28.

‡ Luke iii. 12. 13.

join them to relinquish their employment, as being sinful.

Had the apostles and first disciples of Jesus been, in general, men of profligate lives, we might have expected, from the known candour of the Evangelists, that a circumstance so remarkable would not have been passed over in silence: and this the rather, because the Evangelists are careful in recording the faults and errors of those apostles and disciples, even after they became followers of Jesus.

Concerning one disciple, in particular, we learn from the highest authority, that he was not “a most abandoned sinner.” For it is thus written: “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, “and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, “in whom is no guile *.”

And, without meaning to depreciate the efficacy of divine grace, we may conjecture, that, in the natural dispositions† of the disciple “whom “Jesus loved,” there was something peculiarly amiable.

Jesus came “to call sinners to repentance.”

* John, i. 47.

† Thus John, Peter, and Thomas, all partook of the divine grace; and yet the diversity of character in those three apostles induces us to conclude, that their *natural dispositions* were different. On consulting partial or fictitious accounts of holy persons, we find them all, as it were, cast in the same mould.

And *the heavy laden*, who, on this gracious invitation repaired to him, found rest. It is no less certain, that, after their conversion, great sinners would love him much.

But it is both unwarrantable and dangerous to conclude from this, that the disciples of Jesus, before they heard and obeyed his call to faith and repentance, were, in general, persons of profligate lives, or “most abandoned sinners.”

It is *unwarrantable* to say so, because such an hypothesis has no authority from Scripture ; and that it is *dangerous* will be presently seen.

When Jesus appeared upon earth, there prevailed a general expectation of the coming of the Messiah.

To prove that *he was that* Messiah, Jesus appealed, to prophecies already fulfilled, or which were gradually fulfilling in him ; to the doctrine which he taught ; and to the miracles which he performed.

Now, we ought to weigh all circumstances well before we pronounce, that “many most abandoned sinners,” such as lewd women, robbers, and assassins, were the persons who first discerned the fulfilling of the prophecies in Jesus, the excellence of his doctrine, and the truth of his miracles.

And we ought to be more cautious still, be-

fore we pronounce, from the nature of the thing, that persons placed in “the cold mediocrity of reason” could hardly have become Christians at all.

By the preaching of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, there were added to the Church “about three thousand souls.”

From the abridgement of his discourse, as given by St Luke *, it appears that he did not confine himself to such topics as might raise “emotions of shame, grief, and terror,” in his hearers. His discourse was addressed to their reason, no less than to their passions. It appealed to prophecy ; to “the miracles, wonders, and signs, which God wrought by Jesus ;” to the late fact of his resurrection ; and to one still later, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of the chapter, mention is made of “devout men ;” and there is all reason to believe from the context, that those men were hearers of St Peter. Does Mr Gibbon reckon among *his wonderful conversions*, that

* Acts, ii. 40. The expression, “abridgement of his discourse,” is used, because St Luke says, “with many other words did he testify,” ii. 40. [Ετιςτοις τε λογοις πλειοσι διαμαρτυρειτο.] that is, “he said *much* more, and he appealed to *other* evidence.” All this, although material, is lost or obscured in our vulgar translation.

great increase of the Christian church, of which St Peter was the instrument? If he does, he must either hold, that those “devout men” were not convinced by the *arguments* of the Apostle, or he must distinguish them from his “many most abandoned sinners.”

Mr Gibbon says, that Jesus disdained not the society “of men, and *especially of women*, “oppressed by consciousness, and very often “by the effects of their vices.”

It is no doubt true, that Jesus did not avoid the company of those who led vicious lives; and that he even invited them to repentance. But we have no authority from the Scriptures to assert that there were many persons of that denomination, and *especially women*, who obeyed his gracious call, and became his disciples.

There is one example of this sort, in the case of that female penitent whose conversion is recorded by St Luke *, and to whom our

* Luke vii. 36.—50. The name of this tender-hearted and humble penitent is not known. Many commentators, from Chrysostom down to Grotius, suppose her to have been *Mary Magdalene*; but this is merely a fanciful conjecture, without evidence. The author of *the Golden Legends* goes a step further, and ventures to assert, that “the woman in the “city, which was a sinner, *Mary Magdalene*, and “*Mary the sister of Lazarus*,” are three several appellations of the same person. He says, that the castle of *Magdalum*, and *Bethany*, together with

Lord said, "Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in
" peace."

But surely the circumstances of her story do not warrant the expression which Mr Gibbon has thought fit to use ; and there is, if possible, still less warrant for his applying it to the conduct of the apostles.

The nature of Mr Gibbon's general observations would have been more discernible, had he illustrated them by examples drawn from the Evangelical History. As he has omitted this, we are left to mere conjecture ; and pos-

large possessions in Jerusalem, belonged to Lazarus, and his two sisters Martha and Mary ; that they divided the inheritance ; and that the castle of Magdalum fell to the share of Mary, who on that account was called *Magdalene*. Mary, continues the *historian*, being very rich and beautiful, abandoned herself so excessively to unlawful pleasures, that she lost her own name, and got *that* of the sinner. After having accommodated all this, as well as he could, to the conversion of the penitent woman in St Luke, he adds, "this is the Mary
" Magdalene whom the Lord placed on a footing
" of most intimate familiarity, so that he made him-
" self her guest, and had her for his purveyor in his
" journies. *Hæc est illa Maria Magdalena—Domi-
" nus eam familiarissimam sibi constituit, hospitam
" suam fecit, procuratricem eam in itinere habuit.*" Sanct. Legend. fol. 160. b. edit. 1476. The expression in Mr Gibbon corresponds better with the Golden Legends, than with the Evangelical History.

sibly we may imagine that he alludes to “eminent saints” who were not in his thought.

Perhaps he had St Paul in his view; a most eminent saint indeed, but who nevertheless acknowledged himself to be “the chief of sinners*.”

If so, it may be fit to remind him, that *that* Apostle was at no time a “most abandoned sinner,” in the common acceptance of the phrase; but, on the contrary, was one who “derived a calm satisfaction from the opinion of his own rectitude.”

St Paul, speaking of his state while he was yet a persecutor, says, that he had been “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God†;” that, “after the strictest sect of the *Jewish* religion, *he* lived a Pharisee ‡;” and at the same time, for his “manner of life from his youth,” he appealed to the evidence of his accusers themselves.

And more particularly still, he speaks of himself to the Philippians, as of one “touching

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

† Acts xxii. 3. “The perfect manner,” [*ακριβειαν*], that is, “the accuracy” or “strictness.” At c. xxvi. 5. *κατα την ακριβεστατην αγωγην*, is translated, “after the most *strictest* sect.”

‡ Acts xxvi. 5.

“ the righteousness which is of the law, blameless *.”

Yet he acknowledged, that he was “ the chief of sinners.”

There was an interval of upwards of *thirty* years between the time at which Saul, “ breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, made havock of the church †,” and the time at which St Paul made this acknowledgement to his friend Timothy.

The labours and the sufferings which that good man had undergone in the cause of Christ, and for the sake of the brethren, were great ; yet all that he had done and suffered could not reconcile him to himself, or make him overlook what he had been.

“ Many of the saints,” says he in another place, “ did I shut up in prison—and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them ; and I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme ‡.”

* Philip. iii. 6.

† Acts viii. 3. ; ix. 1. The phrases, ἔτι ἐμπνεῶν ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόνου, and ἐλυμαίνετο τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, have an energy in the original, which the translation, “ breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” and “ made havock of the church,” does not express.

‡ Acts xxvi. 10. 11. This word “ blaspheme,” [βλασφημεῖν,] may be illustrated from a passage in

Not only was he active in procuring the imprisonment of the disciples, in concurring with the popular cry against them, and in using them ill, even when they were engaged in the solemn offices of religion; but he also forced, or attempted to force them to revile Christ.

Filled with the recollection of all these things, St Paul said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, " who hath enabled me, for that he counted " me faithful, putting me into the ministry; " who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, " because I did it ignorantly in unbelief: And " the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ " Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy " of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into " the world to save sinners; of whom I am the " chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained

the Martyrdom of Polycarp, § 10. Εγκείμενος δὲ τῷ ἀνθυπατρί καὶ λεγοντος, ὁμοσον, καὶ ἀπολύω σε· λοιδόρησον τὸν Χριστὸν· ὁ Πολυκαρπὸς εἶπεν, Οὐδόηκοντα καὶ ἐξ ἑτῆ δαλεῖω αὐτῷ, καὶ ὅθεν ρυηδικήτην· καὶ πῶς δυναμὶ βλασφημῆσαι τὸν βασιλέα μὲ τὸν σωτᾶντά με; " And when the " Proconsul still urged him, saying, swear, [by the " fortune of Cæsar], and I will set thee free; *revile* " Christ; Polycarp thus spake: These fourscore " and six years serve I him, and he has never " wronged me; how then can I *blaspheme* my King " and my Saviour?" Remains of Christian Antiquity, v. i. 12.

“ mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might
 “ shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to
 “ them which should hereafter believe on him
 “ to life everlasting *.”

If then Mr Gibbon meant to place St Paul among those who, before their conversion to Christianity, were “ abandoned sinners,” he did injustice to the character of the most candid of men.

Mr Gibbon says, that “ those persons who,
 “ in the world, had followed, though in an
 “ imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence
 “ and propriety, derived such a calm satisfac-
 “ tion from the opinion of their own rectitude,
 “ as rendered them much less susceptible of the
 “ emotions—which have given birth to so ma-
 “ ny wonderful conversions.”

* 1 Tim. i. 12.—16. “ Injurious,” [ὀφειλὴν], might be paraphrased, “ one who added insult to “ injury.” When St Paul said, that he persecuted the brethren “ ignorantly in unbelief,” [ἐγνων ἐν ἀπιστίᾳ], he did not mean, that he was in a situation which excluded him from the knowledge of the truth. It is more probable, that he alluded to the words of our Lord, Luke xxiii. 34. “ Father, for-
 “ give them, for they KNOW not what they do.” [Πατερ, ἀφες αὐτοῖς· ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ οἶδασιν τί ποιοῦσι.] “ as St Peter did on another occasion, when he said, And “ now, brethren, I wot that through IGNORANCE ye “ did it,” Acts iii. 17. See all this better explained, Hurd. Sermon. vol. ii. sermon. vii.

It has been already observed, in passing, that *this* is not applicable to the Jews, who, when our Lord appeared upon earth, were looking earnestly for “ the hope and consolation of “ Israel * ; and it would have been strange indeed, if “ abandoned sinners” alone, or especially persons of such a character, had searched the Scriptures at that time, and compared what was said of the Messiah in them, with what Jesus taught and did.

The Heathens, who were *satisfied* with their own rectitude, because they had followed the dictates of benevolence in an *imperfect manner*, could hardly have aimed at that *Christian perfection* which Mr Gibbon admires and applauds.

If Epicureans enjoyed calm satisfaction, without believing in Providence ; and Stoics, without having any certain and consistent notions of a future state ; and the numerous tribe of Sceptics, without knowing what to believe at all ; they would, no doubt, be ill disposed for receiving, from Jewish fishermen and tent-makers, a system of *faith*, founded on the principle of a *Providence*, and on the assurance of *immortality*.

Such were the *learned* and the *eminent* among the Heathens in the earliest days of the church ;

* Acts xxviii. 20. Luke ii. 25.

and, as we may well imagine, few of them became converts to the Christian religion.

But let us examine the case of persons in the middle and lower ranks of life ; for it is certain that the Heathens who, in the apostolical age embraced Christianity, were generally of that sort. The question is, Whether, before their conversion, they were worse men than the other Heathens who rejected the gospel ? If they were not, Mr Gibbon's argument from *the reason of the thing* may be laid aside, together with his *theory of emotions*.

Julian indeed affirms on this subject, what Mr Gibbon seems to suppose, and he gives St Paul for his authority ; but he makes a *little* alteration in the words of the Apostle, and quotes him as having said, "such ye were," instead of "such were *some* of you *."

Although all the Corinthian converts to whom St Paul addresses himself, had been guilty of some one or other of the sins that he mentions, it would not follow, that they were worse men than those who rejected the gospel.

The profligacy of the Heathens in the apostolical age was much more enormous than some people know, or at least are inclined to confess.

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. *Και ταυτα τινες ητε.* — *Υμεις τοιςτοι ητε.* Cyril, adv. Julian vii. 245. edit. Spanheim.

Several of the things mentioned by St Paul belonged to the very profession of Paganism, such as those superstitious and impure rites which come under the general name of "idolatry."

Other things also, which occur in the same passage, had too much countenance from the popular religion; were practised, without reserve, by the people*; and, to say no more, were connived at by the magistrate.

Corinth, for example, was vicious beyond the measure of vice in great cities. Strabo relates, that the temple of Venus at Corinth was exceedingly rich, so as to have in property more than a thousand harlots, the slaves [or ministers] of the temple, donatives made to the goddess by persons of both sexes. Hence, says he, the city was crowded, and became wealthy†.

* Here let me remark, that an expression in Mr Gibbon's work, not altogether foreign to the present subject, appears exceedingly reprehensible. He says, with what justice I mean not to inquire, that "of the first fifteen Roman Emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct," i. 93. n. 40. This is said of an Emperor who was very lewd, and who lived in incest. As to the others, it seems *their taste in love was not entirely correct*. What a strange circumlocution!

† Το τε της Αφροδιτης ιερον ετω πλεσιον υπηρξεν, ωστε πλεις η χιλιας ιεροδουλαις εκεκτητο εταιρας, ας ανετιθειαν τη θω και ανδρες και γυναικες και δια ταυτας εν

The orgies of Bacchus made part of what Mr Gibbon calls the *cheerful* religion of Paganism, i. 553. ; and they would have afforded a decent apology for drunkenness, had the Greeks required any thing of that nature : but it is probable that those rites, as well as many others, were formed on the manners of the people ; and that, if the vulgar Greeks had not been drunkards, their priests and legislators would not have made drunkenness an ingredient in the vulgar religion.

No one who is acquainted with what may be termed the national character of the Greeks, will deny that they were “ revilers.” While

πολυωχλειτο ἡ πόλις, καὶ ἐπλῆτιζετο. l. viii. p. 581. To this it is that Stephanus Byzantinus refers. Καὶ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΑΖΟΜΑΙ. τὸ εἰταίρειν' ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Κορίνθῳ εἰταιριῶν, κ. τ. ε. De Urbibus, v. ΚΟΡΙΝΘΟΣ. Hence also the proverbial expression, Ἄ Κορινθία εἰκάς, κ. τ. ε. and the public prayers in that city, “ for the increase of the number of harlots.” From a brothel of such magnitude, maintained by the *piety* of the people, universal corruption of manners must have ensued : and although *that* Corinth which the Apostle saw might have exhibited but a poor epitome of her more ancient debaucheries ; yet climate, situation, and religion being considered, we must acknowledge the propriety of his exhortation, Φευγετε τὴν πόρνεian, 1 Cor. vi. 18. And this will lead us to remark, that his transition in that chapter from one subject to another is not so abrupt as at first sight we may be apt to imagine it.

they were free, or supposed themselves to be free, this intemperance of language resembled liberty; and their conquerors, when they deprived them of every thing else, left them in full possession of their petulant humour*.

From this humour it is that we can account for a singular circumstance in their history, that the Cynics, a sect of philosophers, with small pretensions to knowledge, and none to virtue, were harboured and tolerated, and even encouraged, in Greece, during a long succession of ages.

Mr Gibbon says, that the sudden emotions of shame and terror had a *wonderful* effect in the converting of men, and especially of women, to the Christian religion.

It must, however, be obvious to every one, that this implies some antecedent knowledge of Christianity, and belief in its truth: for as the Heathens in general practised, without shame, many things inconsistent with evangelical purity; it behoved the converts from Heathenism to

* This humour was very ancient. Homer, it is probable, spake the language of the people; and he makes his gods and goddesses use great liberties in their familiar conversation.—It would be vain to attempt to make a collection of all the words which express intemperance of speech in the Greek language, such as, φιλολοιδόρος, βαρυγλωσσος, πικρογλωσσος, βλασφημος, δυσφημος, κακοφημος, &c. &c.

learn that such practices were shameful, before they became ashamed of them.

Neither is it likely that emotions of terror, of terror "new and unexpected," as Mr Gibbon elsewhere expresses himself, could have been raised without a previous persuasion of a judgement to come, and of the danger of delaying repentance.

And thus we may conclude, that *faith* was the ground-work of conversion in those Heathens who, at the promulgation of the gospel, embraced Christianity: and we may also be enabled to form a right estimate of an hypothesis mentioned by Mr Gibbon in this passage, and more largely explained in another, where he says, that "the careless Polytheist was assailed by new and unexpected terrors, against which neither his priests nor his philosophers could afford him any certain protection;" and that "his fears might assist his faith and his reason; and if he could once *persuade himself to suspect* that the Christian religion might *possibly* be true, it became *an easy task to convince him* that it was the safest and most prudent party that he could possibly embrace *." i. 567.

* See Matth. xiii. 20. 21. where a more favourable case is put, but with a less favourable inference.

Mr Gibbon adds the reason which induced the profligate rabble, on becoming Christians, to become remarkably devout and zealous in good works.—His solution of this supposed phœnomenon is short and simple. “The desire of perfection,” says he, “became the ruling passion of their soul; and *it is well known*, that, while reason embraces a cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us, with rapid violence, over the space which lies between the most opposite extremes.”

Different men will incline to graduate the moral weather-glass in different ways; and some, on reflecting that there is much to fear and much to hope, may be apt to remove reason at a greater distance from the *freezing point*, than “cold mediocrity” seems to be placed.

Mr Gibbon must allow me to deny, that it is well known that our passions hurry us rapidly, from irreligion to perfect devotion, or from profligacy to perfect virtue; for experience, to say nothing of revelation, assures us of the contrary.

Let me not be understood to deny that there are instances of men who have at once, from a life of irreligion and profligacy, attained to as perfect devotion and virtue as are attainable on this side the grave. I agree with Mr Gibbon, that such conversions are “wonderful:” but

he ought not to ascribe them to our passions ; for then they would not be “wonderful” to men who, like Mr Gibbon, can analyse the passions, and trace *natural* motives to their corresponding effects.

The *second* motive “which might *naturally* “render the lives of the primitive Christians “much purer and more austere than those of “their Pagan contemporaries,” is said by Mr Gibbon to have been “the desire of supporting “the reputation of the society in which they “were engaged, and their own reputation, as “connected with that society.”

But unless the Christians had been incited to virtue by other motives than a regard for their own reputation, and for that of the society to which they belonged, the consequences, with respect to morals and behaviour, would not have been either universal or permanent.

The philosophers who appeared in the Heathen world had those motives, joined to an excessive desire after fame ; and yet they were not such men as Mr Gibbon acknowledges the primitive Christians to have been.

Jesus foretold, and the prediction was soon accomplished, that his disciples should be reviled and persecuted for his sake *.

* “Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for “righteousness sake : for theirs is the kingdom of

Reputation could not have been the object of men who were taught by their Lord to look for obloquy as the appendage of their profession.

We must therefore search for some other cause, which enabled those Christians to be more excellent than their neighbours.

Their motive to the practice of virtue, separate from the motives commonly termed *natural*, was, obedience to the lawgiver whose authority they recognised ; or, in scriptural language, faith in God the Father, and in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr Gibbon, not satisfied with *slightly* mentioning two motives which contributed to the purity of the lives of the primitive Christians, subjoins a supplement, accounting, in a natural way, for their virtues.

Some of the readers of the *Decline and Fall* have censured this Supplement as uncandid, and even invidious.

The primitive Christians, as Mr Gibbon admits, were chaste, temperate, and æconomical ; “ but then,” says he, “ their serious and se-

“ heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile
“ you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner
“ of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice,
“ and be exceeding glad : for great *is* your reward in
“ heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which
“ were before you.” Matt. v. 10.—12.

“questered life, averse to the gay luxury of the
“age, inured them to chastity, temperance, œco-
“nomy, and all the sober and domestic virtues.”
i. 574.

They were remarkable for integrity and fair dealing. But as they were generally of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them to practise such virtues, in order to remove the suspicions that an appearance of sanctity is apt to create.

They were humble, meek, and patient, being exercised in the habits of those virtues by their contempt of the world.

The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other.

Their mutual charity, and unsuspecting confidence, have been remarked by infidels, and were too often abused by perfidious friends*.

* We might add, that their mutual charity is acknowledged, and their unsuspecting confidence ridiculed, by the Atheistical buffoon, Lucian. Mr Gibbon says, p. 574. “The philosopher Peregrinus, of whose life and death Lucian has left us so entertaining an account, imposed for a long time on the credulous simplicity of the Christians of Asia.” It is impossible to determine any thing as to the real character of this Peregrinus while he retained his senses. This only we know, that he became mad, and burnt himself alive in the sight of all Greece, at the Olympian games. Gellius, who knew him well, praises his judgment and equanimity, and says,

And now, let us review the virtues of the primitive Christians, while with *philosophical* impartiality we trace effects to their causes.

The primitive Christians, from their serious and sequestered life, were chaste, temperate, frugal, and inured to all sober and domestic virtues.

From prudence and situation they were of strict integrity, and perfectly fair in their dealings.

From contempt of the world, they learnt to be humble, meek, and patient.

Persecution bound them closer in friendship to one another.

Their mutual charity has been remarked even

that his discourses were profitable, and delivered in a seemly manner. ["Philosophum, nomine Peregrinum, cui postea cognomentum Proteus factum est, *virum gravem atque constantem* vidimus, quum Athenis essemus, diversantem in quodam tugurio extra urbem; quumque ad eum frequenter ventitarem, multa hercle dicere eum utiliter et honeste audivimus."] Noct. Att. xii. 11. Gellius could not have described a chief teacher among the Stoics in higher strains of commendation. So, if Peregrinus was a knave, he imposed on the credulity of Gellius, a Heathen grammarian, no less than on the credulity of the Christians of Asia; who, to say the worst of them, had not the gift of trying the spirits of men, and through an excess of charity, were led to think more favourably of Peregrinus than he deserved.

by infidels ; and their excess in that virtue laid them open to the frauds of bad men.

If we thus employ ourselves in *accounting* for every virtue practised by individuals, it is much to be feared that, in the end, we may lose that amiable quality of Christian benevolence, which “thinketh no evil.”

Jesus has left a more humane rule to his friends. We are to know men by their fruits ; we are to judge of purpose by actions : and indeed any further knowledge is too high for us.

Here it will not escape observation, that Mr Gibbon, without intending to draw a very favourable likeness of the primitive Christians, has made Christian principles the ground-work of many of their virtues.

Thus he says, that “the *serious* and sequestered life of the primitive Christians, averse “to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to “chastity, temperance, œconomy, and all the “sober and domestic virtues.”

Now, the epithet “serious,” is of more consequence than it may at first sight appear. For a sequestered life, averse “to the gay luxury of “the age,” is not necessarily attended by “all “the sober and domestic virtues.” The reverse of all such virtues may be found among men who have never heard of the gay luxury of the

age. But, "a serious life," or a life led with an habitual regard to the nature and consequences of action, may to a certain degree produce the virtues of which Mr Gibbon speaks ; and thus the meaning will be, that such virtues are the consequence of Christian watchfulness : an important truth, and greatly to the honour of Christianity !

Again, Mr Gibbon says, that from *contempt of the world* the Christians learnt to be humble, meek, and patient.

The phrase "contempt of the world" is ambiguous : it may signify "contempt of the superfluities and vanity of the world," or "contempt of all sublunary things." But whether it be understood in the one sense or the other, there is no doubt that some sects among the Heathen philosophers professed as great contempt of the world as any of the primitive Christians ever did ; and yet their speculations and systems were of no efficacy in rendering them humble and meek ; and we may oppose Christian patience to the boasted apathy of the Stoics, without any dread of seeing our religion depreciated by the contrast.

It was on Christian principles that the primitive Christians learnt to be humble, meek, and patient : for they remembered the words of their Lord, "Whoso shall exalt himself shall

“ be abased, and he that shall humble himself
 “ shall be exalted.”—“ Blessed are the meek.”
 —“ Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in
 “ heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.”—
 “ He that endureth to the end shall be sa-
 “ ved *.”

One should have thought that Mr Gibbon, after having treated of repentance and reputation, and analysed the Christian virtues, and accounted for them all, had exhausted whatever he meant to say on the *fourth* secondary cause of the *rapid and remarkable* growth of Christianity.

Yet to the disquisition concerning the “ Vir-
 “ tues of the primitive Christians,” a large mis-
 cellany of unconnected observations is subjoin-
 ed, under these general heads, “ Morality of the
 “ Fathers ;” “ Principles of human nature ;”
 “ The primitive Christians condemn pleasure
 “ and luxury ;” “ Their sentiments concerning
 “ marriage and chastity ;” and “ Their aver-
 “ sion to the business of war and govern-
 “ ment.”

* Matth. xxiii. 12. ; v. 5. ; xi. 29. ; x. 22. Various other texts to the like purpose might have been quoted from the other Evangelists. Many passages in the Epistles are merely a commentary on such texts, and ought to be considered as allusions to evangelical history.

It would have been better, and more scientific, had Mr Gibbon, instead of deviating into collateral inquiries, adhered to that method which he at first chose to prescribe to himself.

The purpose of this work is to examine the five secondary causes assigned by Mr Gibbon for the rapid and remarkable progress of Christianity; and therefore I might be pardoned for declining to follow him where-ever his fancy or genius leads; yet there is such a variety of curious and interesting matter in his miscellaneous observations, that I cannot altogether pass them over in silence.

Let it be remarked in general, that the chief circumstances mentioned in this miscellany seem to have had a natural tendency to retard, instead of accelerating the triumphs of Christianity over the passions, prejudices, and opinions of mankind.

Neither is this all: for on comparing his supplementary disquisitions with his argument on the fourth secondary cause, it will be found, that Mr Gibbon contradicts not only experience, but himself.

Thus, for example, he says, "The Bishops
" and Doctors of the church—carried the du-
" ties of self-mortification, of purity, and of pa-
" tience, to a height which it is scarcely possible

“to attain, and much less to preserve.—A
 “doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime,
 “must inevitably command the veneration of
 “the people ; but it was ill calculated to obtain
 “the suffrage of those worldly philosophers
 “who, in the conduct of this transitory life,
 “consult only the feelings of nature, and the
 “interest of society.” i. 575.

Here the Christian teachers are put in full possession of the veneration of the people ; and yet in the very *next* page Mr Gibbon seems to ascribe to the Christians at large a disposition that would be *rejected by the common consent of mankind* ; and he says, in unequivocal terms, that “it was not in *this* world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful*.” If so, they could not remain in possession of the veneration of the people.

Let us turn back from p. 576 to p. 574. and we shall see that the Christians, no less than the philosophers themselves, did “in this transitory life consult the interest of society.”

Their care for the interest of society, it must be admitted, did not lead them “to conceal the sentiments of an Atheist under the sacerdo-

* The words, “in *this* world,” are redundant ; for the primitive Christians could not be desirous of making themselves *useful* in *another* world.

“ tal robes, or to approach, with the same inward contempt and the same external reverence, the altars of the Lybian, the Olympian, and the Capitoline Jupiter,” i. 38. ; yet they were chaste, temperate, and œconomical, and inured to all the sober and domestic virtues. They were of the strictest integrity, and perfectly fair in their dealings : they were exercised in the habits of humility, meekness, and patience : and the infidels themselves remarked their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence. So says Mr Gibbon ; and the reader will judge, whether they, or the Heathen philosophers and politicians, *as* described by Mr Gibbon, best consulted the feelings of nature and the interest of society.

The section, having this general title, *Morality of the Fathers*, is introduced with these words : “ It is a very honourable circumstance for the morals of the primitive Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue,” i. 575.

This observation, for its amiable candour, deserves our applause ; and had Mr Gibbon always written in such a strain, his only critics would have been the half-learned and superficial cavillers at the Christian religion.

But he proceeds thus : “ The Bishops and Doctors of the church, whose evidence at-

“ tests, and whose authority might influence the
 “ professions, the principles, and even the prac-
 “ tice of their contemporaries, had studied the
 “ Scriptures with less skill than devotion ; and
 “ they often received, in the most literal sense,
 “ those rigid precepts of Christ and the Apo-
 “ stles, to which the prudence of succeeding
 “ commentators has applied a looser and more
 “ figurative mode of interpretation.”

“ Bishops and Doctors of the church” is a comprehensive denomination indeed ! Under it, *all* the Christian writers, for I know not how many centuries, might be ranged ; and accordingly M. Barbeyrac, in his *very judicious* treatise* *De la morale des Peres*, begins his inquiry with Justin Martyr, and ends it with Gregory, surnamed *the Great* ; but, as Mr Gibbon speaks of primitive Christians, and as he treats of the rapid progress of Christianity, it may be presumed that he limits his remark to the “ Bishops and Doctors” who wrote before the civil establishment of the Christian religion.

I mean not to enter into the noted controversy respecting the *morality of the Fathers* ; or, as Mr Gibbon chuses to call them, “ the Bishops and Doctors of the church † ;” neither, indeed,

* It is so called by Mr Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, i. 575.

† Every impartial reader who has not had occa-

has Mr Gibbon treated fully of that subject : he only mentions the fathers as persons whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence the professions, the principles, and even the practice of their contemporaries ; and thence he takes occasion to speak of certain tenets of theirs which he supposes might have been adopted by the church in general.

Here some observations naturally present themselves.

Of all the Christian writers who lived in the first three centuries, Tertullian is he whose works afford the most numerous examples of crude and wild fancies : and no wonder ; for the seeds of fanaticism seem to have been always in him, which at length sprung up, and produced abundant fruits. Every one knows that Tertullian, having adopted the opinions of Montanus, became as contemptible a visionary as ever disgraced genius and learning.

Some men have attempted to draw the line between the works of the *orthodox* and of the *heretical* Tertullian ; and for this they had their

sion to peruse the preface to the Julian of Bishop Warburton, will think himself beholden to me for pointing out to him a manly and candid inquiry into this interesting subject, by one who was no slave to systems, and popular opinions, and popular prejudices.

reasons, unnecessary to be explained at present : but even in his earliest works, the traces of a distempered imagination are to be found.

Such, however, is the man on whose evidence Mr Gibbon chiefly relies for illustrating the professions, the principles, and even the practice of the primitive Christians ; and he has made more quotations from the writings of Tertullian than from the writings of all the other “ Bishops and Doctors ” of the first three centuries : so that, in the work of Mr Gibbon, Tertullian appears like the *foreman* of the Christian world, delegated to speak for all the brethren from the days of the Apostles until that time at which Christianity was established by law, for those who lived after him, as well as for those who lived before him, or were his contemporaries.

In his celebrated *fifteenth* chapter, Mr Gibbon frequently quotes Tertullian, yet he hardly ever refers to Cyprian for proof of the principles and practice of the Christians. It is odd, that as they lived in the same country, and were nearly contemporaries, he should have relied so little on the testimony of the bishop and martyr, and so much on that of the Montanist.

Further, the expression used by Mr Gibbon is singularly cautious, though I am far from saying that there is any studied ambiguity in it.

Instead of asserting that the authority of the "Bishops and Doctors" *did* influence, he observes that it *might* influence the professions, principles, and practice of their contemporaries.

Should it be proved, that the primitive Christians thought and acted for themselves, notwithstanding the authority of those "Bishops and Doctors," Mr Gibbon might say, that he never asserted the contrary; for that he only spake of what *might* have happened, not of what *did*.

No weighty superstructure can be established on such slight foundations; for it still remains unexplained, whether the authority of which Mr Gibbon speaks, *had* influence; and if it had, what was the *extent* of that influence?

Mr Gibbon speaks of an authority which might influence *contemporaries*; but he seems not aware that the word *contemporaries* must be limited to the Christians of the country in which his "Bishops and Doctors" lived, or at least to the Christians who were acquainted with the writings and tenets of those guides, and that it cannot be applied to Christians at large. For example, although the authority of Tertullian should have had influence on the principles and practice of the Christians in Africa who were his contemporaries, it would be

extravagant to suppose, that it had influence in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, where the writings of Tertullian were not generally known, and could only be understood by few.

Besides, it is plain, that the authority of Tertullian, on whose evidence Mr Gibbon seems chiefly to rely, did not influence the principles and practice of his contemporaries *.

* M. Barbeyrac, having successfully ridiculed many of the whimsies of Tertullian, thought it worth his pains to expose the bad taste of some of the Christian writers who are said to have admired the writings of that African heretic. His words are :
 “ On scait cependant, quel cas ont fait de lui d’autres peres, et *sur tout* St CYPRIEN, qui ne passoit point de jour, sans lire quelque chose de Tertullian, et qui disoit a son copiste, en lui demandant les ouvrages de ce pere : *donnez moi mon maistre*, c’est ce que St JEROME dit tenir du copiste meme. Catal. Script. Eccles. p. 284. t. i. edit. Basil. 1537.” Here there is a pleasant anachronism, which would have afforded matter of exultation to M. Barbeyrac had any of the fathers been guilty of it. The copist or secretary of Cyprian could hardly have officiated in that capacity before the age of eighteen or twenty, and could not have met with Jerom sooner than 120 years, reckoned from the death of Cyprian ; so that he must have been about one hundred and forty years of age when he communicated this anecdote to Jerom ! It happens, however, that Jerom tells a very different story. His words are : “ Vidi ego quemdam Paulum Concordiæ, quod oppidum Italiæ est, *senem*, qui se beati Cypriani jam grandis ætatis notarium, quum ipse *admodum*

This might appear from the words of Mr Gibbon himself, who quotes Tertullian as affirming that the "Christians" refused to take any active part in the "military defence of the empire;" and "that it was impossible that, without renouncing a more sacred duty, they could assume the character of soldiers," i. 580.; and yet, in the very same page, Mr Gibbon says, "Tertullian *suggests* to them the expedient of *deserting* *."

"*esset adolescens, Romæ vidisse diceret, referreque sibi solitum nunquam Cyprianum absque Tertulliani lectione unam diem præteriisse, ac sibi crebro dicere, da Magistrum, Tertullianum videlicet significans.*" The reader will observe, that Jerom does not tell so improbable a story as that he himself had conversed with the copist of Cyprian; he only says, that an old man reported, that when he was very young, he heard another old man say, that Cyprian often called Tertullian *the Master*, and frequently read his works. Here, then, there is nothing more than the hearsay of a hearsay, a thing altogether different from what M. Barbeyrac relates.

* The words of Tertullian are: "Aut deserendum statim sit, ut a multis actum, aut omnibus modis cavillandum, ne quid adversus Deum committatur, quæ nec ex militia permittuntur, aut novissime perpetiendum pro Deo, quod æque fides pagana condixit." d. Corona, c. 11. The sentence is obscure, and its just reading is not settled. See the note of Rigaltius. This much, however, is plain, that Tertullian means to point out the inconveniences and temptations which attend Christians.

But, to this purpose, Tertullian's own evidence is still more apposite. He says, "How
 " can a Christian become a soldier, or even an
 " officer of justice, since the Lord has deprived
 " him of his sword ? for although military men
 " came to John the Baptist, and received in-
 " structions from him as to their conduct, and
 " although a centurion embraced the gospel ;
 " yet, afterwards, the Lord, by disarming Pe-
 " ter, disarmed every soldier *." Such was the
opinion of Tertullian. Nevertheless, the *prac-*
tice of Christians in his age was different ; for
 it appears from the treatise *de Corona Militis*,
 that many Christians served in the Roman ar-
 mies ; and again, in his Apology, he says, " we

who become soldiers ; and the first mentioned by
 him is, *that* of their being induced to desert or quit
 the service ; so that he does by no means " suggest
 " the expedient of deserting."

* " Quomodo autem bellabit, imo quomodo etiam
 " in pace militabit, sine gladio, quem Dominus ab-
 " stulit ? nam etsi adierant milites ad Johannem, et
 " formam observationis acceperant, si etiam centurio
 " crediderat : omnem postea militem Dominus, in
 " Petro exarmando, discinxit." d. Idololatria, c. 19.
 M. Barbeyrac explains *in pace* to signify " quand
 " les Chretiens ne sont exposez a aucune persecu-
 " tion ;" *Morale des Peres*, c. 6. § 6. : and no doubt
pax has sometimes the sense of " rest from persecu-
 " tion : " but I have chosen to follow the paraphrase
 of Rigaltius.

“are but of yesterday; and yet we have filled
 “your camps?” and, “we fight along with
 “you *.”

“There are,” says Mr Gibbon, “two very
 “natural *propensities*, which we may distinguish
 “in the most virtuous dispositions, the love of
 “pleasure, and the love of action. If the for-
 “mer is refined by art and learning, improved
 “by the charms of social intercourse, and cor-
 “rected by a just regard to œconomy, to health,
 “and to reputation, it is productive of the great-
 “est part of the happiness of private life†. The
 “love of action is a *principle* of a much stronger
 “and more doubtful nature. It often leads to
 “anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when
 “it is guided by the sense of propriety and be-
 “nevolence, it becomes the parent of every vir-

* “Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus,
 “—*castra ipsa*—vobiscum militamus;” Apol. c. 37.
 42. In this there may be some rhetorical exaggera-
 tion, which, however, will not affect my argument.

† This description seems vague. Suppose one
 should say, “Artifex quidam eruditus amica clan-
 “culum utitur, hilari, faceta, sana itidem ac parvo
 “parabili; ea demum vita est beatior.” Surely
 this does not come up to the notion of what “is
 “productive of the greatest part of the happiness of
 “private life;” although we have *artifex eruditus*,
 [art and learning], *hilaris et faceta*, [social inter-
 course], *parvo parabilis*, [œconomy], *sana*, [health],
 and *clanculum*, [reputation.]

“tue ; and, if those virtues are accompanied
“with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an
“empire, may be indebted for their safety and
“prosperity to the undaunted courage of a sin-
“gle man. To the love of pleasure we may,
“therefore, ascribe most of the agreeable, to the
“love of action we may attribute most of the
“useful and respectable qualifications. The
“character in which both the one and the other
“should be united and harmonized, would seem
“to constitute the most perfect idea of human
“nature. The insensible and inactive disposi-
“tion, which should be supposed alike desti-
“tute of both, would be rejected by the com-
“mon consent of mankind, as utterly incapable
“of procuring any happiness to the individual,
“or any public benefit to the world. But it
“was not in *this* world that the primitive Chri-
“stians were desirous of making themselves ei-
“ther agreeable or useful.” i. 575.

All this is delivered in a solemn, philosophical, and didactic style ; and we must presume, that to the author himself it is perfectly intelligible, but to *one* of his readers it is not.

Mr Gibbon observes, that when “the love of
“pleasure is *refined* by art and learning, *impro-*
“*ved* by the charms of social intercourse, and
“*corrected* by a just regard to œconomy, to
“health, and to reputation, it is productive of

“ the greatest part of the happiness of private
“ life.”

What does this *love of pleasure* imply? According to the description given of it by Mr Gibbon, before it can produce the greatest part of the happiness of private life, it must be *refined, improved, and corrected*. Hence, one might be apt to imagine, that a thing which becomes salutary only by such a *process* of refinement and correction, is, in itself, impure, and even noxious. This at least is plain, that, if prepared by Mr Gibbon's receipt, it is a composition too high-priced for the vulgar, who occupy most of the stations in private life. *Art and learning* are two of its ingredients; and whatever may be the sense of the word *art*, it is certain that *learning* never was, and probably never will be a general acquirement; and here we are taught a thing of which we should otherwise have been ignorant, that “ the greatest part of the happiness of private life lies without the reach of
“ the vulgar.”

Mr Gibbon adds, “ to the love of pleasure
“ we may *therefore* ascribe most of the agreeable
“ qualifications;—the insensible—disposition,
“ which should be supposed—destitute of *it*,
“ would be rejected by the common consent of
“ mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring any
“ happiness to the individual.—But it was not

“in *this* world that the primitive Christians
“were desirous of making themselves agree-
“able.”

The reader will observe that, in the long period from which these expressions are selected, Mr Gibbon has also introduced “the love of action” as a propensity *or* principle; and that he has treated of the effects of it, as well as of “the love of pleasure.” But, although the blending them might ornament a period, the nature and consequences of each will be best understood when they are separately examined.

And *here* again it will not escape the attention of the reader, that Mr Gibbon, while treating of *the virtues of the primitive Christians*, [the *fourth* secondary cause of the rapid progress of Christianity], ascribes to them an insensible disposition, destitute of the love of pleasure, which would be rejected, *by the common consent of mankind*, as utterly incapable of procuring any happiness to the individual.

Now, if the disposition of the primitive Christians was such as to be rejected *by the common consent of mankind*, why is it treated of among the secondary causes of the rapid progress of Christianity?

The case of the primitive Christians, in being thus destitute of the love of pleasure, appears

truly lamentable. Living, as they did, in the religion of love, they must have enjoyed the charms of social intercourse, so far as innocent; and Mr Gibbon himself informs us, that they had a just regard to œconomy, to health, and to reputation; these things, had the Christians been possessed of the love of pleasure, would have *improved* and *corrected* it, but as that principle was wanting, all their sober and domestic virtues could not render them agreeable in *this* world.

Let us now examine the other great principle, which “is of a much stronger and more doubtful nature *, the love of action.”

It is said, that “the love of action often leads
“to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but
“when it is guided by the sense of propriety
“and benevolence, it becomes the parent of
“every virtue; and if those virtues are accom-
“panied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or
“an empire, may be indebted for their safety

* The expression, “more doubtful,” is not altogether accurate: for it had been already observed, that the love of pleasure, in order to its being made productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life, must be *refined*, *improved*, and *corrected*; so that it also, as well as the love of action, is of a very doubtful nature. Had Mr Gibbon, instead of “more doubtful,” said, “*still* more doubtful,” his meaning would have been better expressed.

“and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man—To the love of action, therefore, we may attribute most of the useful and respectable qualifications;—the inactive disposition, which should be supposed—destitute of it, would be rejected by the common consent of mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring—any public benefit to the world. But it was not in *this* world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves—useful.”

It matters not *who* was the inventor of this ingenious theory, which supposes “the love of action” to be one of the great principles in the conduct of rational beings.

A love of action is peculiarly discernible in children before they can act on rational principles; and the most restless child is, generally, the healthiest. This is owing to an instinct independent of reason, and proceeding from the wise will of the Giver of all good; and it has no more connexion with rational principles than the power of sight has, or the sense of feeling; and therefore we cannot, with any propriety, attribute “most of the useful and respectable qualifications” to that species of the love of action.

The immaterial and immortal spirit of man is always busy, unless its exertions be impeded

by some external or adventitious cause; and hence it might be said, in a metaphorical sense, that the human soul loves action. Is *that* the meaning of Mr Gibbon? and is *that* all?

I write under very great disadvantages, being unable to apprehend clearly the sense of the phrase "love of action," any more than that of "the love of pleasure."

It is said, that "the love of action, when guided by the sense of benevolence, becomes the *parent* of every virtue." But since benevolence is a virtue, how can the love of action, when guided by it, become its *parent*?

Mr Gibbon asserts, "that this "love of action" often leads to anger, to ambition, and to "revenge." Does "the love of action" lead a man to rail at his wife, beat his servants, undermine his rival in politics, or assassinate his enemy?

The inference drawn by Mr Gibbon from the union and harmony of the two principles might, at first view, appear to point at a discovery of their nature. "The character," says he, "in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonized, would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature."

This might remind us of the character of *that* person who realised the most perfect idea

of human nature ; yet should I say of *that* person, whom Mr Gibbon and I were early taught to look on as *the great Exemplar*, that the love of pleasure and the love of action were two great principles in his conduct, Mr Gibbon would justly charge me with a weak attempt to vilify OUR SAVIOUR.

Unless in *him*, we cannot look for the most perfect idea of human nature, or, rather, for perfection exhibited *in* human nature.

But let us review the most distinguished characters of mere men, rough and very imperfect sketches at best of moral excellence ; and then decide whether the love of pleasure and the love of action were the great principles in the conduct of Phocion, Epaminondas, and Marcus Antoninus ; of Alfred, the soldier, student, and legislator ; of Bayard, termed *Le Chevalier sans reproche* ; of the virtuous and gallant Sir Philip Sydney ; of La Noüe, whom, while he was engaged in the fiercest tumults of party, all parties applauded ; and of William the First, Prince of Orange, who, that he might establish civil and religious liberty, abandoned every other object, whether of interest or ambition.

And, not to multiply examples, we may affirm, that the simple and mild virtues of those eminent sea-commanders de Ruyter and Law-son, flowed from a purer source than the love of

pleasure or action. Whenever the public had no occasion for their services, they withdrew into the calm mediocrity of private life, and only returned from their retreat when they were called to fight, bleed, and die for the land of their fathers.

His next section bears this general title : "The primitive Christians condemn pleasure and luxury." These terms are vague ; for, in modern language at least, the word *pleasure*, may imply something that is lawful as well as what is unlawful, and there are hardly two men who ascribe the same meaning to the word *luxury*.

But, without criticising on its title, let us examine the contents of this section. "The acquisition of knowledge," says Mr Gibbon, "the exercise of our reason or fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements, however, were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the severity of the Fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of discourse as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech," i. 576.

On comparing the title with the text, we see that Mr Gibbon holds "the primitive Chri-

“stians” and “the Fathers” to be equivalent terms. This mistake, obvious to every reader, pervades his argument. Whenever he discovers, or imagines that he has discovered, a weak or absurd opinion in the works of *any* primitive writer, he presently concludes that *all* the primitive Christians adopted it.

In the passage now under our view, “Fathers” is limited to the African writers of the *third* century; for all the authorities on which Mr Gibbon relies are quoted from the works of Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Lactantius.

It is singular, that of the three witnesses produced by Mr Gibbon for proving the opinion of the primitive Christians in all countries, and during three centuries, one of them, Tertullian, should have been a visionary and a heretic; another, Lactantius, a person whose sentiments are admitted by every scholar to have been, in many and important particulars, erroneous; and a third, Clemens Alexandrinus, a compiler of the opinions and even of the conceits of Heathen philosophers.

And it is, if possible, still more singular, that Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Lactantius, should be held out as “despisers of all knowledge that was not necessary to salva-

“tion ;” for they were learned, and industrious to make parade of their learning.

One might rather have looked for such contempt of secular knowledge in Jacob Boehmen and his illiterate admirers, than in a lawyer, a professor of sciences, and a rhetorician.

The truth is, that those writers did not despise secular knowledge, but they considered it to be of less utility and importance than religious attainments.

— Possibly Tertullian, after he became Montanist, may have asserted the fanatical tenet of “devotion and ignorance ;” but *that* will not affect my proposition.

Mr Gibbon proceeds to give a long catalogue of enjoyments and gratifications of sense, said to have been condemned by Clemens Alexandrinus, and other Christian writers of the third century.

1. It is said, that “with *our devout predecessors*, the first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of the abuse of the “senses,” i. 576. 577. But did they say so? Did they, for instance, hold, that the first sensation of an agreeable smell, was the first moment of the abuse of the sense of smelling? Even *the stern* Tertullian thought otherwise; for he relates, without the slightest censure, that the Christians of his age and country indulged

themselves in the elegant gratification of the sense of smelling *; and Lactantius, after having broke loose from the schools of Heathen philosophy, says, that the pleasures of the senses ought to be *regulated*; and then proceeds, like a Christian moralist, to condemn such gratifications as are vicious †.

2. “The unfeeling candidate for Heaven was “instructed—to shut his ears against the *profane* harmony of sounds,” i. 577. The force as well as the truth of this expression seems to rest on the word *profane*. It may well be supposed, that the Christians kept away from the music of their Heathen neighbours, as being connected with the popular religion, or as having been rendered subservient to the purposes of debauchery.

There is no doubt that, in our days, music may be innocent; and that songs may be sung without any offence to morals, or even to deco-

* “Non emo capiti coronam, quid tua interest
“emptis nihilominus floribus quomodo utar? puto
“gratius liberis et solutis et undique vagis. Sed et
“si in coronam coactis, nos coronam *naribus* novimus. Viderint *qui per copillum odorantur.*” Apol. c. 42.

† “Quinque sensuum voluptates——virtute superari atque opprimi debent; *vel*, quod paulo ante dicebam de affectibus, *ad rationem suam revocari.*” Instit. Divin. vi. 20.

rum. But we are not from thence to infer, as seems to have been inferred by some writers, that the primitive Christians, when they shut their ears against the music and songs of the Heathen world, were morose, and unreasonably rigid.

No one can deny, that the primitive Christians did well in keeping at a distance from the music and songs of the Heathens, when used in such of their ceremonies as were properly religious.

But Paganism was not confined to temples and the public offices of religion. It entered into civil life, and its influence extended even to convivial entertainments. It was the universal practice of the Heathens, to personify virtues, habits, and qualities, and to convert them into objects of worship. Hence a metrical eulogy on Fortitude or on Health became a religious hymn, and hence, for example, a Christian could not have joined with the Heathens in singing the famous hymn to *Health*, which extols that imaginary goddess as worthy of the highest veneration.

Very few of the songs of the Heathens, even when they did not relate to the popular religion, were fit for the ears of a Christian*, at least if

* There is still extant a Greek song, applauding that which ought not to be once named among us, and even urging its propriety.

we may judge of what is lost by what is still extant.

The Christians adopted that part of the religious worship of the Jews which consisted in music ; and, therefore, it is impossible that they could have “ shut their ears against the harmony of sounds ;” it was the *abuse* alone of music which they condemned.

These preliminary observations being kept in view, we may easily account for what Clemens Alexandrinus has said, in the passage alluded to by Mr Gibbon. So far from censuring music in general, Clemens says, that the lyre or the harp, that is, stringed instruments, ought to accompany the singing of psalms or hymns, and even the saying grace before and after meat *.

It is true, that he disapproves of wind-music ; and his reasons for this are not so ridiculous as M. Barbeyrac represents them † : But the de-

* Pædag. ii. 4. In that chapter, Clemens Alexandrinus says, *Και γαρ ἁρμονίας παραδεικτεον τας σωφρονας — τα δε αυσηρα και σωφρονικα μελη αποτασσειται ταις της κειθης αγρωχαις καταλειπτεον εν τας χρωματικας ἁρμονίας ταις αχρωμοις παροιαις, και τη ανθοφορῳση και ἱταιρηση μουσικη.* The learned reader needs not to be informed, that, anciently, a chaplet of flowers was the badge of debauchery ; and that, in Greek, *ανθοφορειν* and *ἱταιρειν*, were, in effect, synonymous. Hence we may see what sort of music it is which the author condemns.

† *Morale des Peres*, c. v. § 15.

cencies of modern language are such, that it is impossible, without deviating from them, to explain the meaning of Clemens Alexandrinus.

We have seen, that in the first and second instances produced by Mr Gibbon, the opinions of those primitive writers to whom he alludes, have been either mistaken or ambiguously reported. Let us proceed to the others.

And here it may be fit to remark, that most of those sentiments which are censured in the works of Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Lactantius, occur in the works of Seneca, the philosopher and statesman, who expresses them with more pompous words, and in warmer strains of declamation, than any of the three Africans use. So that, granting those primitive authors to have been, in the matter of Ethics, morose and absurd, their moroseness is not without great example, nor are their absurdities singular.

It is proposed to compare "the reasonings" of the Christian writers of the third century, with "the reasonings" of a Heathen philosopher.

In the course of this parallel, the quotations will be chiefly from Clemens Alexandrinus, against whom M. Barbeyrac aimed most of his learning and pleasantry.

3. "The primitive Christians were instruct-

“ ed to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art.” Seneca went farther ; he viewed them not only with contempt, but even with some degree of abhorrence. “ I cannot be persuaded,” says that eminent philosopher, “ to admit painters among the professors of liberal arts, any more than statuaries, and those who work in marble, and *the other ministers of luxury* ; in like manner ; I extrude wrestlers, whose whole science is in oil and mud ; were I not to extrude them, I should be obliged to admit perfumers and cooks, and every other person who bestows his talents in furthering our pleasures *.”

Thus, according to Seneca, Reynolds and Wilton ought not to be distinguished from “ the best wrestler on the green,” or from a French cook who is at the head of his profession !

Which of the primitive writers is it that associates painters and statuaries with wrestlers,

* “ Non enim adducor, ut in numerum liberalium artium pictores recipiam, non magis quam statuarios, aut marmorarios, aut *cæteros luxuriæ ministros*. *Æque* luctatores et totam oleo et luto constantem scientiam expello ex his studiis liberalibus : aut et unguentarios recipiam, et coquos, et cæteros voluptatibus nostris ingenia accommodantes sua,” Epist. 88.

perfumers, and cooks, in the great academy of luxury?

Seneca passionately exclaims against the first attempts towards that elegance in the laying out of garden-ground which we are apt to admire as one of "the most finished productions of human art." Let none who value the judgement of Seneca presume to swell knolls, to smooth lawns, or to form cascades *.

Had Seneca been acquainted with the serpentine line of beauty, he, no doubt, would have shewn, by many philosophical arguments, that a straight line, being consonant with nature, was much preferable to undulations.

Seneca laughed at the absurdity of those improvers who planted trees merely for the shade which they might afford; and when his contemporaries laughed in their turn, at such language uttered by an improver like Seneca, he gravely discoursed of theory and practice, and demonstrated that his theory might be just, although his practice were wrong †.

Of the primitive Christians Mr Gibbon says, that "they were *instructed* to view with in-

* "Luxuria vult—terras transferre—flumina præcipitare," d. *Ira*. l. i. c. 16.

† "Cur arbores, præter umbram nihil daturæ, conseruntur?" d. *Vita Beata*, c. 17. The whole passage well deserves a careful perusal.

“ difference the most finished productions of
 “ human art.” But by whom were they in-
 structed? Lactantius shall answer, Even by the
 Heathen philosophers*.

4. “ Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and
 “ elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the
 “ double guilt of pride and of sensuality.”
 i. 577.

To the like purpose whole pages might be
 transcribed from the works of Seneca. Thus
 he says, “ Whenever prosperous times have
 “ diffused luxury, an attention more than usual
 “ begins to be paid to dress; next, pains are
 “ taken in the choice of household furniture;
 “ and, lastly, men bestow much study and care
 “ even on their habitations, that they may be
 “ so spacious as to cover whole fields, that the
 “ walls may glisten with marble brought from
 “ foreign countries, that the ceilings be varie-
 “ gated with gold, and that the brightness of

* “ Voluptas oculorum varia et multiplex est,
 “ quæ capitur ex aspectu rerum quæ sunt in usu, vel
 “ natura, vel opere delectabiles. *Hanc philosophi*
rectissime sustulerunt. Aiunt enim multo esse
 “ præclarius et homine dignius, cœlum potius, quam
 “ cœlata intueri, et hoc pulcherrimum opus inter-
 “ micantibus astrorum luminibus, tanquam floribus
 “ adornatum, quam picta, et ficta, et gemmis dis-
 “ tincta mirari,” *Divin. Instit. l. vi. c. 20.*

“ the floors correspond with that of the ceilings *.”

“ Luxury wishes to be supported by ivory couches, to be clothed in purple, and to be overspread with gold †.”

“ Place before me whatever dazzles the eyes of nations and monarchs ; let me behold the purchases made by blood, and with the jeopardy of your lives ; and the chief spoils won by luxury, either in their order, or, which is better, all in one heap : That which I first discern is a tortoise wrought up to the nicest perfection of fineering, shells of the foulest and most sluggish animals, bought at exorbitant prices, and then so stained as to make them lose their agreeable variety of clouding,

* “ Ubi luxuriam late felicitas fudit, cultus primum corporis esse diligentior incipit ; deinde suppellectili laboratur ; deinde in ipsas domos impenditur cura, ut in laxitatem ruris excurrant, ut parietes, advectis trans maria marmoribus, fulgeant, ut tecta varientur auro, ut lacunaribus pavimentorum respondeat nitor,” Epist. 114. Every one acquainted with the style of Seneca must know with what difficulty his meaning can be expressed in English. The gradation described by the philosopher is, in general, just ; but many of the intermediate steps, in the progress to great refinement, are omitted.

† “ Luxus ebore sustinere vult, purpura vestiri, auro tegi,” d. Ira, l. i. c. 16.

“ and assume the appearance of real wood.
 “ Here I see tables, a plank of timber valued
 “ at a senator’s fortune ; and therefore the
 “ more valuable because twisted into many
 “ knots by the cross growth of the tree.
 “ There, crystal cups, whose brittleness en-
 “ hances their price ; for in the opinion of the
 “ injudicious, that very risk which ought to
 “ deter us from wishing to possess a thing, in-
 “ creases the pleasure of possession. I see
 “ pearls, but not one to each ear ; for our ears
 “ are now become inured to carry burdens, and
 “ pearls are united, and above them others also
 “ are placed. The triumph of mad female ex-
 “ travagance over man, would not have been
 “ complete, had not two or three estates hung
 “ from each ear. I see silken coverings, if
 “ indeed *they* may be denominated *coverings*,
 “ which neither protect the body nor the me-
 “ desty of women ; and which are of such a
 “ texture, that she who wears them can hardly
 “ affirm herself not to be naked *.”

* “ Volo sub conspectu meo ponere quæ gentium
 “ oculos regumque præstringunt ; volo intueri præ-
 “ tia sanguinis animarumque vestrarum [f. *vestra-*
 “ *tum*] ; prima mihi luxuriæ spolia propone : sive
 “ illa vis per ordinem expandere, sive, ut est melius,
 “ in unum acervum dare. Video elaboratam scru-
 “ pulosa distinctione testudinem, et fœdissimorum
 “ pigerrimorumque animalium testas, ingentibus

What would have been said, if any writer among the primitive Christians had aggravated the crying enormity of tortoise-shell-ornaments, from the circumstance of the tortoise itself being the most sluggish of animals? Pity that Seneca knew nothing of the formation of silk! if he had, he would, no doubt, have informed admiring posterity, that Roman matrons took pride in being arrayed in the entrails of vile worms!

“ pretiis emptas, in quibus ipsa illa quæ placet
 “ varietas, subditis medicamentis, in similitudinem
 “ veri [f. *veri ligni*] coloratur. Video istic mensas,
 “ et estimatum lignum senatoris censu, eo pretiosius,
 “ quo illud in plures nodos arboris infelicitas torsit.
 “ Video istic crystallina, quorum accendit fragilitas
 “ pretium; omnium enim rerum voluptas apud im-
 “ peritos, ipso quo fugare debet periculo, crescit.—
 “ Video uniones, non singulos singulis auribus com-
 “ paratos; jam enim exercitatæ aures oneri ferendo
 “ sunt: junguntur inter se, et insuper alii binis
 “ superponuntur. Non satis muliebris insania viros
 “ subjecerat, nisi bina ac trina patrimonia auribus
 “ singulis pendissent. Video sericas vestes, si
 “ vestes vocandæ sunt, in quibus nihil est quo de-
 “ fendi aut corpus aut denique pudor possit; quibus
 “ sumptis, mulier parum liquido nudam se non esse
 “ jurabit,” d. Beneficiis, l. vii. c. 9. The reader
 will not find, in Clemens Alexandrinus, a dissertation
 on tortoise-shell inlaid; but he will find a more
 serious argument, as to *naked drapery*, than is in
 Seneca. See Pædag. l. ii. c. 10. p. 234. edit.
 Potter.

“In their censures of luxury,” says Mr Gibbon, “the Fathers are extremely minute and circumstantial,” i. 577.

In describing the luxury of the Romans, Seneca also is “extremely minute and circumstantial.” His eighty-sixth epistle, more particularly, ought to be perused by those who talk of the extreme minuteness, as well as of the pious indignation of the primitive writers. It may be doubted, whether Tertullian, in his most fanatical mood, ever declaimed with greater extravagance than Seneca does in that epistle.

Mr Gibbon proceeds to enumerate the various articles which excited the pious indignation of the Fathers.

5. “False hair.” Seneca, in drawing that admirable portrait of Caligula, omits not his “false hair *.”

6. ‘Vases of gold and silver.’——“That which I like,” says Seneca, “is the clumsy plate which belonged to our homely forefathers, without ornament or name of artificer †.”——“If a man should set his wishes on

* “Tanta capitis destituti et *emendicatis capillis*. aspersi deformitas,” d. Constantia sapientis, c. 18.

† “Placet—argentum grave rustici patris, sine ullo opere et nomine artificis,” d. Tranquillitate animi, c. 1.

“ having a house splendidly furnished with
 “ vessels of gold, and with silver plate, the
 “ workmanship of renowned ancient artists,
 “ with brass, which the folly of a few has made
 “ precious, and with the marble of every nation,
 “ although all these things should be accumu-
 “ lated in his possession, still they would not
 “ satiate desires which are insatiable *.”

7. “ Downy pillows.”——“ How wretched
 “ must our ancestors have been,” exclaims
 Seneca ironically; “ for the earth was their
 “ bed †.”——“ Attalus was wont to commend a
 “ pillow that did not yield to the body. Such
 “ a one I use, even in old age; my head leaves
 “ no mark on it ‡.”

It may be proper to observe, that Clemens
 Alexandrinus condemns soft beds of down, a
 being inconvenient, and as tending to obstruct

* “ Si desiderat aureis fulgentem vasis supel-
 “ lectilem et antiquis nominibus artificum argentum
 “ nobile, æs paucorum insania pretiosum et nati-
 “ onum omnium lapides, ista, congerantur licet,
 “ nunquam explebunt insatiabilem animum,” Consol.
 ad. Helviam, c. 11.

† “ Scilicet majores nostri——infelices erant——
 “ quibus terra cubile erat,” Consol. ad Helviam,
 c. 10.

‡ “ Laudare solebat Attalus culcitram quæ re-
 “ sisteret corpori; tali utor etiam senex, in qua
 vestigium apparere non possit,” Epist. 108.

regular digestion * : so that *he* assigns a reason for his censure of them, which Seneca does not ; and he adds, “ On the other hand, it is a piece of Cynical vain glory, to be studious of sleeping, like Diomede, on a bull’s hide ; this ought to be done only in cases of necessity †.” When Seneca boasted of his hard pillow, Clemens Alexandrinus would scarcely have acquitted him of *Cynical vain glory*.

“ White bread.” Seneca advises his friend and pupil Lucilius to feed often on hard and coarse bread ‡. “ I dine,” says he, “ without a table, on dry bread ; and, after such a dinner, I need not wash my hands ||.” To dine without a table seems the triumph of philoso-

* Pædag. l. ii. c. 9. p. 216. in his dissuasives from what are termed *luxuries*, Clemens Alexandrinus generally introduces arguments with regard to the preservation of health. Whether the arguments be his own, or borrowed from ancient physicians and moralists, I know not.

† “ Πάλιν τε αὖ κινοδοξίας ἐστὶ Κυνικῆς, καθάπερ τοῦ Διομηδῆ, ἐπιτηδεύειν,

“ Ὑπο δ’ ἐστρωτο εἶνον βοῦς ἀγροαυλοῖο.

“ Πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἀρεὰ ἡ περιστάσις ἀναγκάζοι.”

Pædag. l. ii. c. 9. p. 217.

‡ “ Panis durus ac sordidus,” Epist. 18. See more to the like effect, Consol. ad Helviam, c. 11.

|| “ Panis deinde siccus, et sine mensa prandium ; post quod non sunt lavandæ manus,” Epist. 83.

phy; and to dine without having occasion to wash, “equals man with Jove!”

“Having little, learn to be satisfied; and
“magnanimously utter aloud these words, *Let*
“*us have water and a cake of barley, and we*
“*will contend with Jupiter himself for felicity* *.”
This applauded saying was of Epicurus †. The
flight seems tolerably high, yet the *self-suffi-*
ciency of Seneca soared far above it; for he
adds, “nay, I beseech you, not having them,
“let us so contend ‡.”

And in another passage, he asks, “has *that*
“man too little, of whom it can only be said,
“that he is not chilled with cold, that he is
“not hungry or athirst? Jupiter himself pos-
“sesses not more ||.”

It is probable that Mr Gibbon alludes to a
passage in Clemens Alexandrinus, when he

* “Disce parvo esse contentus: et illam vocem
“magnus animosusque exclama, *Habeamus aquam,*
“*habeamus potentam, Jovi ipsi de felicitate contra-*
“*versiam faciamus,*” Epist. 110.

† “Ἐπικερος ὁ Γαργήλιος κερραγε λεγών, ὡ ὀλίγον ἐκ
“ἱκανόν, τέτω γε εἶδεν ἱκανόν. Ἐλεγη δὲ ἐτοιμῶς εἶχειν
“καὶ τῷ Διὶ ὑπὲρ εὐδαιμονίας ἀγωνίζεσθαι, μαζὰν ἔχων καὶ
“ἕδωρ.” Epicurus. ap. Stobæum.

‡ “Faciamus, oro te, etiam si ista defuerint,”
Epist. 110.

|| “An parum habet, qui tantum non alget,
“non esurit, non sitit? plus Jupiter ipse non habet,”

says, that the Fathers condemned the use of *white bread*. But I persuade myself that he has trusted to the accuracy of M. Barbeyrac's version, instead of consulting the original, which runs thus: " Besides, by boulding the flour, " and so excluding the nutritive parts of the " wheat, they over-refine [or render effeminate] " that bread which, in itself, is light on the " stomach, and may be easily digested; and " thus necessary sustenance is converted into a " shameful gratification of taste *." Clemens

Epist. 119. Is this the language of the *Portico*, or of *Bedlam*? The sentiments of St Paul are somewhat different from those of the two wise men. Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐμάθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι, ἀνταρκῆς εἶναι. οἶδα δὲ ταπεινωθῆναι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν. ἐν παντί καὶ ἐν παντί μεμνημέναι καὶ χορταζέσθαι, καὶ πείναν, καὶ περισσεύειν καὶ ὑπερεῖσθαι. He adds the reason, πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμυνῆναι με χρεῖω. Philip. iv. 11.—13. In another passage, i. Tim. vi. 6. Εὐσέβεια is joined with ἀνταρκεία, a thing which would have astonished Seneca. And the Christian encouragement to this virtue is to be found in Heb. xiii. 5. Ἀρκούμενοι ταῖς παρθεσὶν αὐτοῦ γὰρ εἰρηκέν· οὐ μὴ σε ἀνῶ, ὅδ' οὐ μὴ σε καταλίπω. The promise under the spiritual theocracy is like *that* under the Jewish, Deut. xxxi. 6. There is more energy in " for he *himself* hath said," [αὐτοῦ γὰρ εἰρηκέν], than in all the high-sounding phrases of Seneca.

* Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν εὐκόλον βρωσιν, τὸν ἀερίον, ἐκθληνέουσιν, ἀποστηθόντες τὰ πυρρὰ τοῦ τροφίμου, ὡς τὸ ἀναγκαῖον τῆς τροφῆς, οὐκ οἶδος γίνεσθαι ἡδονῆς, Poëdag. l. ii. c. 1. p. 164. M. Barbeyrac transcribes the *whole* of the passage,

Alexandrinus does not blame fine bread because of its delicacy, but because of its unsuitness for food. It is of no consequence whether his theory of aliments be just or erroneous; he may have been mistaken in adopting a vulgar opinion, but the conclusions which he draws from it are not unreasonable.

8. "The use of foreign wines." This article hardly deserved a place in Mr Gibbon's catalogue; but such as it is, Seneca did not overlook it: for, while enumerating the luxuries of his own age, he mentions "wine of different vintages, and of various nations *."

Clemens Alexandrinus, though a primitive Father, speaks very reasonably on this subject. "If," says he "Chian wine be not at hand, we ought not to be solicitous about it. All wines come from God's vineyard, and any sort is enough for a temperate guest;—and why

in his notes, *Morale des Peres*, c. v. § 13.; but he translates only *part* of it. His words are: "Il met au rang des excès de bouche condamnable, l'usage du pain blanc: c'est, dit-il, *effeminer et tourner un aliment nécessaire en opprobre de volupté*." This is not a full, and, perhaps, it is not a fair translation, even of the *abridgement* of Clemens Alexandrinus; for the French word *volupté*, in its most common sense, is much too forcible for the corresponding word in the original.

* "Tot Consulium regionumque vina," Epist 115.

“ may not the wine of his own country satisfy him *.”

Here there is nothing of that *pious indignation* mentioned by Mr Gibbon. Clemens Alexandrinus does not condemn the use of foreign wines, when they can be had ; but when such cannot be had, he censures those who fastidiously reject the wine of their own country.

“ Public salutations.” Seneca severely censures the fashion of frequenting the levees of the powerful and the wealthy ; and of making frivolous visits † ; and he even censures *morning*

* *ὁ πολυπραγμονητεὺς τοίνυν τὸν οἶνον τὸν Χιὸν, ἀν ἀπλ. — εὐφρονι συμποτῇ οἶνος εἰς, ἑνὸς γεωργίου θείῃ --- τι γὰρ ἐκ εὐποχρῆ οὐ βίττωριος ἐπιπληρώσεται τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν.* Pœdag. l. ii. c. 2. p. 184. 185. The Greek phrase *ὁ πολυπραγμονητεὺς*, answers nearly to the colloquial phrase in English, “ there is no need to *make much work* about it.” The word *συμποτής*, is translated “ guest,” because there occurs not any word in the English language which conveys the exact notion of *συμποτής*. This is singular in a nation composed of *clubs*. Clemens Alexandrinus says, “ all wines come from God’s vineyard.” The reader will remark, that in this passage there are metrical numbers ; and, therefore, it is probable that here the author, as on numberless other occasions, alludes to some passage in a Greek poet.

† De Brevitate vitæ, c. 14. ; d. Beneficiis, l. vi. c. 33. 34. These passages are very circumstantial, and no less curious.

salutations at temples *. Had Clemens Alexandrinus spoken in the like style, the example of the philosopher might have afforded some apology for his pious indignation ; but something very different was meant than that which M. Barbeyrac calls “ *se saluer de vue*,” and which Mr Gibbon inadvertently renders “ public “ *salutations*.”

Clemens Alexandrinus says, of “ the holy “ *kiss*” mentioned in St Paul’s epistles, “ that “ it is not by the use of that ceremony, but by “ the demonstration of good will, that we are “ to judge of real Christian love ; that nothing “ bred more disturbance in the church, than “ that ceremony did when used by persons void “ of the real benevolence of the heart ; that “ the *kiss* afforded ground for much abuse and “ scandal ; that it was *mystical*, and hence St “ Paul denominates it *holy*.” All this is unexceptionable ; and the inference which Clemens Alexandrinus seems to draw from it is

* “ *Quomodo sint dii colendi, solet præcipi.——*
 “ *Vetemus salutationibus matutinis fungi, et foribus*
 “ *assidere templorum : humana ambitio istis officiis*
 “ *capitur. Deum colit qui novit,*” Epist. 95. This is one example, out of a thousand, of the state of the Heathen world. The philosophers saw, despised, and derided the superstition of the people ; and yet they did not attempt to introduce any thing better in its place.

this, that the ceremony ought to be limited to the assemblies of the Christians at the celebration of their mysteries or secret religious worship; and that it ought to be performed with gravity. Then he adds that remark, which Barbeyrac first, and after him Mr Gibbon, have thought fit to detach from his general argument: “But Christians are not partakers even of the smallest portion of divine grace, when, with a foolish forwardness, they salute each other in the public ways, *so as to wish to be remarked by the Heathens* *.” Let any one who understands Greek, judge whether this be the language of fanaticism, or of sound reason and prudence, and then let him say, whether Barbeyrac was not much to blame in misleading Mr Gibbon.

9. “The use of warm baths.” *Here* Seneca loses all patience. He exclaims against every sort of warm bath, whether natural or artificial,

* Αγαπη δε εκ εν φιληματι αλλ’ εν ευνοια βρισκεται. οι δε, εδεν αλλ’ η φιληματι καταψοφει τις εκκλησιας, το φιλην ενδον εκ εχοντες αυτο, και γαρ δη, και τετο εκπεπληκεν υπονομιας αισχρας και βλασφημιας το αναιδην χρησθαι τω φιληματι, οπερ εχρην ειναι μυστικον. ΑΓΙΟΝ αυτο κεκληκεν ο Αποστολος. κ. τ. ε. — αλλα μην και οι κατα τας οδους αγαπητων ατπατμοι, παρρησιας ανοητω γεμοντες, καταφανων τοις εκτος ειναι βελομενων, εδεελαχιστης μετεχουσι χαριτος. Pœdag. l. iii. c. 11. p. 301.

whether wet or dry *. And here, which is not always the case, he confirms his precepts by his own example. "Throughout life," says he, "I have avoided warm baths †." It seems that, in his younger days, he frequented the school of Attalus the philosopher ; from him he learnt, among other things, to love poverty. On his return into the world, he continued to practise a few of the lessons which Attalus had taught him, and particularly *that* of abstaining from the use of the warm bath, and from the eating of oysters ‡. As to "the love of poverty," we

* "Quid mihi cum istis calentibus stagnis ? quid cum sudatoriis, in quæ siccus vapor corpora exhausturus includitur ?" Epist. 51. "Ubicunque scatebunt aquarum calentium venæ, ibi nova diversoria luxuriæ excitabuntur," Epist. 89. I translate this for the benefit of my unlearned readers. "Where-ever there are new watering-places, there will be lodging-houses and ordinaries." This great truth is foretold in elegant Latin.

† "In omnem vitam balneum fugimus," Epist. 108.

‡ "Cum vero commendare paupertatem cœperat, et ostendere, quam quicquid usum excederet, pondus esset supervacuum et grave ferenti : sæpe exire e schola pauperi libuit. — Inde mihi quædam permansere, Lucili. Magno enim in omnia impetu veneram : deinde ad civitatis vitam reductus, ex bene cœptis *pauca* servavi," &c. Epist. 108.

know not well what became of it ; in all likelihood, it became purely *Platonic*.

10. "The practice of shaving the beard." Seneca says, "while occupied in the smoothing and polishing of our bodies, we extinguish any spark that may yet remain of virtuous manners *."

"With what propriety," exclaims he, ironically, "can those men be said to have nothing to do, who, every day, have many hours to get rid of with their barber, while each single hair that may chance to have sprung up, since the night before, is cropped †?"

He asks, What is the use of mirrors, or of any smooth surface reflecting objects that are placed before it ? His first answer is a negative one ; "Not surely that we might be enabled to pluck at our beards, and polish the face of a man ‡!"

* "Adhuc quicquid est boni moris extinguimus, lævitate et politura corporum." Nat. Quæst. l. vii. c. 31.

† "Quid illos otiosos vocas, quibus apud tonsorem multæ horæ transmittuntur, dum decerpitur si quid proxima nocte succrevit?" d. Brevitate vitæ, c. 12.

‡ "Non in hoc, scilicet, ut ad speculum barbam faciemque [f. faucesque] velleremus, aut ut faciem viri poliremus," Nat. Quæst. l. i. c. 17.

“ A nice and effeminate person speaks in
 “ dainty language, such as they use who pluck
 “ out their beard, or who shave it, and rub it
 “ smooth about their lips, and leave the rest of
 “ it stroked down *.”

Thus far the philosopher.—Let us now hear the Montanist. Mr Gibbon says, “ the
 “ practice of shaving the beard is, according to
 “ the expression of Tertullian, a lie against our
 “ own faces, and an impious attempt to improve
 “ the works of the Creator. d. Spectaculis,
 “ c. 23.”

Tertullian abounds in extravagant fancies, but *that* ascribed to him by Mr Gibbon is none of them.

While declaiming against public shews, Tertullian uses some expressions which Mr Gibbon seems to have misunderstood.

It is difficult, in a literal translation, to render intelligibly into English, the harsh and obscure

* “ Delicati hominis tenera et fluxa oratio est,
 “ quod vides istos sequi, qui aut vellunt barbam,
 “ aut intervellunt, qui labra prorsus tondent et abra-
 “ dunt, servata et submissa cætera parte,” Epist. 114.
 Perhaps my version does not exactly describe the elegant trimming of those days. One thing is remarkable; Seneca seems to ascribe the decay of eloquence to shaving, while he himself, with his rough Stoical beard, contributed more, by his own example and authority, to that decay, than all the smooth chinned coxcombs of Rome.

language of Tertullian. The following paraphrase may be thought to express his meaning.

“ Can *he* be acceptable in the sight of God,
 “ who uses a razor to make himself appear dif-
 “ ferent from what he is? Such a man is un-
 “ faithful towards his own countenance, not
 “ only by disfiguring it, but also by subjecting
 “ it to contumely : for he shaves his head that
 “ he may personate bald Saturn ; and his chin,
 “ that he may personate the goddess Isis, and
 “ the young Bacchus : and, moreover, in ludi-
 “ crous exhibitions, he assumes the guise of a
 “ buffoon ; and submits to the insult of having
 “ his cheeks smitten, as if he meant to turn
 “ into ridicule that precept of our Lord, *to him*
 “ *that smiteth one cheek, offer the other* *.”

This paraphrase may appear free, but the intelligent reader will judge whether it deviates from the sense of the original.

It is plain, that Tertullian does not speak of *the practice of shaving the beard*, as opposed to the *letting it grow*.

To have a smooth chin might be necessary

* “ An Deo——placebit, qui vultus suos novacula mutat? Infidelis erga faciem suam, quam non contentus Saturno, et Isidi, et Baccho proximam facere, insuper contumeliis alaparum objicit, quasi de præcepto Domini laudat, [l. ludat],” d. Spectaculis, c. 23.

for one who represented the character of Isis or Bacchus ; but Tertullian, however absurd *his* imaginations were, could not have supposed that it was necessary that a man should shave his beard for qualifying himself aptly to represent the character of old Saturn.

We must grant, that Clemens Alexandrinus condemns the practice of shaving the beard. This is not strange in an author who had the Greek philosophers constantly before his eyes ; yet he permits *that* trimming of the beard, against which Seneca so pathetically declaims.

Besides, if any one will take the pains of examining the *Pædagogus*, b. iii. c. 3. he will perceive that Clemens Alexandrinus treats of unutterable enormities which, in his days, were connected with the fashions condemned by him. The persons of whom he speaks, ministered to the abominations of wretches, “ whose taste in “ love,” that I may use the civility of modern language, “ whose taste in love was not altogether correct.”

If, in our days, there were a particular dress appointed by custom to courtezans, *he* would not be termed a severe moralist who should censure virtuous women for assuming that dress, and shewing false colours.

11. The only remaining article in Mr Gib-

bon's catalogue is, "the prohibition of the use
"of any colour except white."

Here, it is probable, that Mr Gibbon alludes to a passage in which Tertullian argues for the use of wool in its natural colour; because, if the Divinity had thought fit that wool should have been purple or sky-blue, he would have created sheep of those colours *. The treatise which contains this rhapsody, bears other marks of a deplorable disorder of mind; and if Mr Gibbon relies on such a passage, from such a work, for proving the opinion of the primitive writers, and the practice of the primitive church, it must be allowed that his proof falls wonderfully short of the charge.

Clemens Alexandrinus says, that "*white* and
"plain raiment is the most consonant to men of
"clear consciences and of genuine internal
"piety †; and that *white* is the best colour for
"the peaceable and the illumined ‡."

* "Quis enim est vestium honor justus, de adul-
"terio colorum injustorum? Non placet Deo quod
"non ipse produxit, nisi si non potuit purpureas et
"aerinas oves nasci jubere," d. Cultu foeminarum,
l. i. c. 8.

† Τῆς δὲ λευκῆς, καὶ ἡ νοῦς τὰ εὐδὸν, λευκαὶς καὶ
ἀπειρεργοῖς ἀρμόδιωτάτον εἶσθαι χρῆσθαι. Pœdag. l. ii.
c. 10. p. 234.

‡ Ἐιρηνικοῖς ἀγα ἀνθρώποις καὶ φοτεινοῖς καταλλήλον
τὸ λευκόν. Pœdag. l. iii. c. 11. p. 286.

With respect to Clemens Alexandrinus, as a Christian author, it matters not whether this opinion be shallow or profound, dull or ingenious, sense or nonsense ; for it is mere Platonism, and accompanied with a quotation in the very words of Plato * ; so that, as to this particular at least, we may hope to hear no more of *the pious indignation* of the Father, in his preference of *white* to all other colours : he did but copy from an original which, according to the present taste, is unexceptionable.

Seneca does not enjoin the use of white garments alone to his contemporaries ; neither could he, without introducing confusion into the customs of Rome, civil as well as religious. But

* 'Ο παντα αριστος Πλατων, υφη̄ν̄ εκεινην αποδεχεται, η μη πλεον εργον προτεισι γυναικος σωφρονος. χρωματα δε λευκα, πρεποντα αν̄ ειη σεμνοτητι, και αλλοθι, λεγει, και εν υφη̄ : βαμματα δε μη προσφερειν, αλλ' η προς τα πολεμικα κοσμηματα. ib. The corresponding passage in Plato runs thus : 'Υφη̄ν̄ δε μη πλεον εργον γυναικος μιας εμμενον. χρωματα δε λευκα πρεποντ' αν̄ θεις ειη, και αλλοθι, και εν υφη̄. βαμματα δε μη προσφερειν, αλλ' η προς τα πολεμικα κοσμηματα d. Republica, l. xii. p. 691. edit. Ficini. The learned reader will observe, that Clemens Alexandrinus has interpolated *the virtuous woman* from the Old Testament, and *moral comeliness* from the New ; but that, as to the rest, he quotes Plato, and argues analogically from the sentiments of that philosopher. What follows in Plato well deserves the attention of those who imagine, that trifling is the peculiar attribute of the primitive Fathers.

many of the enormities which afford topics for the eloquence of that philosopher, have been altogether overlooked by the primitive writers ; such as, 1. The use of any transparent substance corresponding to the glass-windows of modern times ; 2. The employing of stoves, in order to keep chambers warm ; 3. The bringing of fish alive to market ; and, 4. The cooling of liquors with ice or snow.

1st, As to what might be denominated “ glass-windows.” Seneca says, “ How much do some persons of our times censure Scipio for his clownish manner of life, in not having had large panes to give light to his warm bath *.”

2dly, “ Stoves.”—“ A slight breath of air will be dangerously chilling to him whose eating rooms are kept in an equal temperature by means of warm air conducted under the floor, and diffused around the walls †.”

* “ Quantæ nunc aliqui rusticitatis damnant Scipionem, quod non in caldarium suum latis specularibus diem admiserat,” Epist. 86. ; that is, in colloquial language, “ it was shockingly ungentle for Scipio,” &c. On the same subject he says elsewhere, “ Quem specularia semper ab adflatu vindicarunt,” d. Providentia, c. 4.

† “ Cujus cœnationes subditus et parietibus circumfusus calor temperavit, hunc levis aura non sine periculo stringet,” d. Providentia, c. 4.

3dly, “The bringing of fish alive to market.”
 —“We were wont to be surprized at the nice-
 “ty of those men who would not touch a fish,
 “unless on the day that it was caught, and un-
 “less, as the phrase is, it tasted of the sea.
 “Hence, fish were conveyed by post; hence,
 “way was made for the carriers, as they hurried
 “along, bawling, and out of breath. To what
 “a length have the refinements in good living
 “come! *That* fish is now considered as stale
 “which was caught and killed to-day. *Is he*
 “*alive?* says the Epicure. *I cannot depend upon*
 “*you in a matter of such moment; let me have*
 “*ocular demonstration: bring him hither, that I*
 “*may see him die* *.”

4thly, But it is on the subject of ice that Seneca exerts his utmost abilities in rhetoric.—
 “We have discovered the secret of piling up
 “water so as to make it resist the warmth of
 “summer, and defy its greatest heat, by the

* “Mirabamur tantum in illis esse fastidium, ut
 “nollent attingere, nisi eodem die captum piscem:
 “qui, ut aiunt, saperet ipsum mare. Ideo cursu ad-
 “vehebatur, ideo gerulis, cum anhelitu et clamore
 “properantibus, dabatur via. Quo pervenere deli-
 “ciæ! is pro putrido piscis affertur, qui [non] hodie
 “eductus, hodie occisus est. *Nescio de re magna*
 “*tibi credere: ipse oportet mihi credam: huc affe-*
 “*ratur, coram me animam agat.*” Nat. Quæst. l. iii.
 c. 18.

“ coldness of the repository prepared for that
 “ purpose ; and what have we got for all our
 “ pains ? why, truly, that we may be able to
 “ purchase water, which we might have had for
 “ nothing * ! ”

“ Wretched is the state of a sick person !
 “ why ? because he does not melt snow ; be-
 “ cause he does not add to the coldness of his
 “ draught already mixed in a large goblet, by
 “ laying pieces of broken ice on it † . ”

“ You take Socrates to have been hardly dealt
 “ with, because he quaffed the state-poison no
 “ otherwise than as a medicinal draught, be-
 “ stowing immortality, and discoursed of death
 “ till it arrived ; because his blood froze, and, a
 “ chillness gradually coming over him, his pulse
 “ ceased to beat. How much more is he to
 “ be envied than they for whom some impure
 “ minister of debauchery drops snow into a gold
 “ cup ‡ ? ”

* “ Invenimus quomodo stiparemus aquam, ut ea
 “ æstatem vinceret, et contra anni fervorem defen-
 “ deretur loci frigore. Quid hac diligentia conse-
 “ cuti sumus ? Nempe ut gratuitam mercemur
 “ aquam.” Nat. Quæst. l. iv. c. 13.

† “ O infelicem ægrum ! quare ? quia non nivem
 “ diluit ; quia non rigorem potionis suæ, quam capa-
 “ ci scypho miscuit, renovat fracta insuper glacie.”
 Epist. 78.

‡ “ Male tractatum Socratem judicas, quod illam
 “ potionem publice mixtam, non aliter quam medi-

“ Women also, as well as men, nibble at snow,
 “ to give ease to their boiling stomachs *. Can
 “ you doubt that such summer snow is the
 “ cause of obstructions in the liver † ?”

The most acute censurer of the ancient Christian writers will hardly be able to point out in any of them, Tertullian himself not excepted, more ridiculous declamations than those of Seneca against *iced liquors*.

Indeed, many things censured by passionate moralists, under the vague appellations of *luxuries*, are, in themselves, indifferent, and are censured merely on account of their being new or uncommon. This may be shewn in the *four* particulars, of which Seneca has said so much, and which are not mentioned by the Christian writers in question.

“ camentum immortalitatis obduxit, et de morte disputavit usque ad ipsam ! male cum illo actum est,
 “ quod gelatus est sanguis, ac, paulatim frigore inducto, venarum vigor constitit ! Quanto magis
 “ huic invidendum est, quam illis — quibus exoletus
 “ — suspensam auro nivem diluit !” d. Providentia,
 c. 3. The rhetorician blends *nix* and *exoletus* !

* “ [Fœminæ] æque nivem rodunt, solatium stomachi æstuantis,” Epist. 95.

† The phrase “ callum obducere,” is translated, “ the cause of obstructions.” The original is not very intelligible ; and, perhaps, Seneca’s knowledge as a physician may here be questioned.

In our days, every English gin-shop has more convenient, and perhaps more elegant *glass-windows*, than an Emperor, or even the freed-man of an Emperor, had in the days of Seneca. Throughout the northern continent of Europe, *stoves* are used in the habitation of the mechanic as well as in the palaces of sovereigns. The Dutch boor purchases *live fish* in the market; and *iced liquors* are drank by the young *Lazzaroni* of Naples, men generally without house and without home.

Should these observations serve as an apology for Seneca, it is well; but *that* candour which forgives him will, no doubt, be equally indulgent to others, who, to say the very worst of them, have only offended as he did.

The case of Tertullian is the least favourable of any, and yet candour may possibly find something to be urged in behalf of a man who, amid all his extravagancies, could thus express himself. “May we not, in long-suffering, safely
“commit every thing to God? If our injuries,
“he is our avenger; if the damages which we
“have sustained, he will make restitution; if
“our pain, he is our physician; and should we
“lay down our life, it is he who can raise us
“again *.”

* “Satis idoneus patientiæ sequester Deus. Si injuriam deposueris penes eum, ultor est; si dam-

My labour, in instituting this comparison between the extravagant fancies of Seneca and those ascribed to some of the primitive writers, will have been ill bestowed, should my readers imagine that I mean to vindicate any errors in the primitive writers, by pointing out similar errors in an eminent Heathen philosopher.

Mr Gibbon had full liberty to select, from all the primitive writers, whatever tended to expose them to ridicule ; and yet, even with the aid of the mistakes and exaggerations of Barbeyrac, he has not been able to produce, from their works, any instances of injudicious and trifling censures on the luxuries and conveniences of life, which are not to be equalled, if not exceeded, by the passionate declamations of Seneca on the like topics.

But further, it was in the schools of Heathen philosophy that the Christian writers learnt to declaim in that style, which Mr Gibbon ascribes to " pious indignation." Let us be consistent, and not blame the scholars, while we extol the masters whom they chose to imitate *.

" num. restitutor est ; si dolorem, medicus est ; si
" mortem, resuscitator est," d. Patientia, c. 15.

* Of this preposterous imitation many instances might be given. The following, selected from the works of Clemens Alexandrinus, will serve for a specimen. That learned man attempted to introduce

After what has been said, we need not make many observations on the conclusion which Mr Gibbon thinks fit to draw. “When Christianity was introduced among the rich and the polite, the observance of these singular laws was left, as it would be at present, to the few who were ambitious of superior sanctity. But it is always easy as well as agreeable, for the inferior ranks of mankind, to claim a merit from the contempt of that pomp and pleasure which fortune has placed beyond their reach. The virtue of the primitive Christians, like that of the first Romans, was very frequently guarded by poverty and ignorance *.” i. 577.

into the Christian religion many of the Stoical paradoxes. He asserts, that the Christian ought to be exempted from passions, and that persecution is not an evil. Ἐξαίρετεον ἀρχὸν τὸν Γνωστικὸν ἡμῖν καὶ τελειὸν, ἀπὸ παντὸς ψυχικῆς παθῆς. ἡ μὲν γὰρ γνώσις, συνασκησιν. ἡ συνασκησις δέ, ἐξ ἧς ἡ διαθέσις. ἡ καταστασις δέ ἡ τοιαύτη ἀπαθείαν ἐργάζεται, ἡ μετριοπαθειαν. ἀπαθειαν δὲ καρπύεται παντελὴς τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐκκοπή. Stromat. l. vi. c. 9. p. 777.

—Εἴπαν δ’ ἐμπειρίαν εἶπεν, ὅταν διακώσιν ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ πόλει τούτῃ φεύγετε εἰς τὴν ἀλλήν. εἰς ὥς κακὸν τὸ διωκεσθαι παραινέει εὐχριν. κ. τ. ε. Stromat. l. iv. c. 10. p. 597. There is much more to the like purpose. But we have not so learnt Christ!

* The comparison between the primitive Christians and the first Romans, might afford a wide field for criticism; and it might be shewn, that the word *ignorance*, with which the period concludes, is egregiously misapplied.

One should suppose from this conclusion, that the use of false hair, of warm baths, and the practice of shaving the beard, and the like, were things appropriated to the opulent, and that they were placed beyond the reach of the inferior ranks of mankind.

And another inference, still more singular, might be drawn from it, that every thing said by the primitive writers on the subject of supposed luxuries, was aimed against the gratifications in which the Heathens indulged, and had nothing to do with the manners of the Christians themselves.

Mr Gibbon forgets that he is treating of a period which comprehends two hundred years, and that his inferences are drawn from authors who lived in the third century; and he will find it difficult to reconcile what he says here with what he afterwards says, p. 591.—596. of the wealth of the church, produced by the oblations of believers.

Mr Gibbon thus proceeds: “The chaste severity of the Fathers, in whatever related to the commerce of the two sexes, flowed from the same principle, their *abhorrence* of every enjoyment which might gratify the *sensual*, and degrade the *spiritual* nature of man. It was their *favourite opinion*, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he

“ would have lived for ever in a state of virgin
 “ purity ; and that *some harmless mode of vege-*
 “ *tation* might have peopled Paradise with a
 “ race of innocent and immortal beings.” i. 577,
 578.

Mr Gibbon adds, in a note, “ Justin M. Gre-
 “ gory of Nyssa, Augustin, &c. strongly incli-
 “ ned to this opinion.”

The opinion of Gregory of Nyssa, of Au-
 gustin, or of any other Christian writer who
 lived after Christianity came to be established
 by law, cannot enter into Mr Gibbon’s inquiry
 as to the causes of the rapid progress of our re-
 ligion *.

It is difficult for an author to conceal his *fa-*
vourite opinions, even when decency requires

* *By the aid of Barbeyrac*, I have discovered the
 sentiments which Augustin entertained on this sub-
 ject. Although absurd enough, they do not seem to
 be such as Mr Gibbon ascribes to him. See *Morale*
des Peres, c. iv. § 32. I have lately discovered,
 that a very ingenious person has made the same ob-
 servation, and has pointed out a want of accuracy in
 that historian, whom he admires. In the same *cri-*
tique, he says something of *sarcasms*, which is singu-
 lar enough. The treatise here alluded to, ought to
 have been intitled, “ *Essays on female celibacy.*”
 Its present title is much too ludicrous for a treatise
 written, as may be presumed, with a grave purpose.
 As to the opinion of Gregory of Nyssa, I have also
 searched Barbeyrac, but cannot discover it.

some reserve, or when prudence hinders him from being very explicit. But the primitive writers; who, it seems, laid down the law to all other Christians, could not have been deterred from publishing a *favourite opinion* by any such considerations. Yet so it is, that Mr Gibbon has not pointed out, among the writers of the first three centuries, any thing of that kind, except in a passage of Justin M. to which he refers without quoting it.

The distinction between *sensual* and *spiritual*, which Mr Gibbon ascribes to the Fathers, was made by certain heretics, called *Encratite*, and afterwards by Marcion, and the visionaries who followed his opinions.

A plain man, on perusing the first and second chapters of Genesis, would not have ascribed the holy union of the sexes to man's disobedience; and, on hearing the positive declaration of our Lord, he must have concluded that marriage was *in the beginning* *.

But, unhappily, there arose in the Christian church many persons who affected to be wise, not only *above* what was written, but also *against* what was written; and I doubt not that some one or other of those persons might have uttered the extravagancies which Mr Gibbon is plea-

* Matth. xix. 4. & 8.

sed to number among the *favourite opinions* of the primitive writers *.

To return from those visionaries to Mr Gibbon : He says, “ the use of marriage was permitted only to the fallen posterity of Adam, “ as a necessary expedient to continue the human species, &c.—The hesitation of the orthodox casuists on this interesting subject, betrays the perplexity of men, unwilling to approve an institution which they were compelled to tolerate †.” i. 578.

* Of the first author of this unexampled absurdity, I know nothing.—Euripides, surnamed the *woman-hater*, introduced into his *Hippolytus*, a complaint and remonstrance against the gods on this subject. Sir Thomas Brown, as every one knows, repeated it; and our great poet dignified it by his lines,

.....“ O why did God,
“ Creator wise,” &c.

The satirical declaimer, the humourist, and the offended husband, satisfied themselves with proposing an improvement on the works of Providence : But the *Fathers* of Mr Gibbon went farther, and conjectured that man was created anew by reason of the fall !

† This is borrowed from Barbeyrac : “ La verite est, que les Peres de l'Eglise regardoient du moins implicitement le desir du mariage, second ou premier, comme ayant par lui meme quelque chose d'impur, et qui tient de la corruption de notre nature.—Ils n'osoient cependant avouer la chose :

It is said, in illustration, that “ the virgins of
 “ Africa—permitted *priests and deacons* to share
 “ their bed, and gloried—in their unsullied pu-
 “ rity.—This new species of martyrdom served
 “ only to introduce a new scandal into the
 “ church.” i. 579.

Much attention has been bestowed in height-
 ening this picture with the warmest colours :
 but it seemed unnecessary to transcribe any
 more of his narrative than what might serve to
 render the subject intelligible. Mr Gibbon
 adds, in a note, that “ Baylé has amused him-
 “ self and his readers on this very delicate sub-
 “ ject.” Bayle treats of very delicate subjects.

“ tout crument, d'autant plus qu'ils falloit eloigner
 “ les soupçons de conformite avec les Montanistes.
 “ —Peut-etre meme que ces heretiques pressoient
 “ les Peres par des consequences tirees de ce qu'ils
 “ etablissoient eux-memes au sujet des secondes no-
 “ ces, et les reduisoient par la a la necessite de faire,
 “ par rapport aux premieres, et aux secondes, ces
 “ aveus si peu d'accord au fond avec leurs idees.”
 Morale des Peres, c. iv. § 31.

Mr Gibbon might, without any impropriety,
 make an elegant paraphrase of the rustic French of
 Barbeyrac. It were to be wished, however, that he
 had adverted to this circumstance, that Barbeyrac
 spake of the opinions of Jerom and others, who, li-
 ving *after* the civil establishment of Christianity,
 could not, by their doctrine and writings, have ei-
 ther retarded or accelerated its progress *before* that
 establishment.

with very little delicacy. His language is not that of a well-bred man; and the topics on which he *amuses* himself and his readers, are not always judiciously chosen. It is from him that Mr Gibbon has borrowed the phrase of “new species of martyrdom.” Mr Gibbon, in his second volume, bestows the epithet of THE MALICIOUS on Bayle.

In the notes, Cyprian, Epist. iv. is quoted as the voucher for this fact; and, no doubt, the natural inference from it is, that towards the middle of the third century, the priests and deacons of the numerous churches of Africa were either crazy fanatics, fit only for a mad-house, or luxurious hypocrites, well deserving a place in a house of correction.

He will think himself indebted to me for observing, that here he has relied on the good faith of others; and that he has not consulted the original authority: For there is not a single word in the 4th epistle of Cyprian and his brethren to Pomponius, importing that *any priest* was even suspected of the indecent extravagancies with which Mr Gibbon, being himself misled, amuses his young readers. *One* deacon was suspected; and him Pomponius, before he had consulted with Cyprian, prohibited from the exercise of his sacred functions. Why then did Mr Gibbon speak so positively concerning

the *priests and deacons* of Africa? It was because he trusted to the eyes of another, who chose to see, in the works of Cyprian, what is not to be found there; and thus attempted to fix an indiscriminating stain on the African ecclesiastics.

What would be said of an historian who should observe, that in the reign of Queen Anne, the lawyers at the English bar were infidels, because Toland, a lawyer, wrote in that reign; or that, in the reign of George I. the booksellers of London employed priests and deacons of the church of England to write against Christianity, because, in that reign, Woolston, a mad clergyman, published his rhapsodies on the miracles of Jesus?

It is added, “The sensual connection was refined into a resemblance of the mystic union of Christ with his church, and *was pronounced to be indissoluble either by divorce or death.*”

This extraordinary proposition is not supported by any authorities; and yet it would require some very strong evidence indeed, to persuade us, that in the former case the primitive writers directly contradicted our Lord, and in the latter, St Paul*.

* Matth. xix. 9.; Rom. vii. 1. 2.; i. Cor. vii. 39. From the similitude of marriage and the mystic union of Christ with his church, the fair conclusion is, that

“ The practice of second nuptials was branded with the name of a legal adultery; and the persons who were guilty of so scandalous an offence against Christian purity, were soon excluded from the honours, and even from the alms, of the church.” There is added in a note, “ See a chain of tradition, from Justin Martyr to Jerome, in the *Morale des Peres*, c. iv. § 6.—16.” i. 578.

M. Barbeyrac, on this occasion, serves as the *substitute* of Mr Gibbon, so it is against him that my argument must be directed. Some things, however, ought to be observed in the entrance.

The opinion of seven or eight individuals, who lived in different ages and countries, can hardly form “ a chain of tradition.”

As to “ the chain of tradition” *after* the establishment of Christianity by law, it is not connected with Mr Gibbon’s subject, or with the purpose of these observations.

And with regard to the opinions of Christian writers who lived *before* that æra, it may, perhaps, appear in the sequel, that Mr Gibbon

adultery or wilful desertion, dissolves marriage, not that marriage is indissoluble; and the case, of the death of one of the parties, has no concern with that mystic union, of which Mr Gibbon so speaks as if he understood it not.

ought rather to have relied on his own reading, and his own impartial judgement, than on hasty compilations made by Barbeyrac in the heat of controversy.

Thus much having been premised, let us examine the different links in this chain of tradition forged by Barbeyrac.

According to Mr Gibbon, the first testimony to the unlawfulness of second marriages is to be found in *Justin Martyr*.

It happens, however, that in the 4th chapter of *Morale des Peres*, Barbeyrac does not quote Justin Martyr at all.

In another passage, indeed, he quotes some words of a fragment on *the Resurrection*, which he is willing to acknowledge as the work of Justin Martyr*. But that quotation, supposing it to have been rightly interpreted by Barbeyrac, tends to condemn marriage altogether; and surely an heretical tenet of the *Encratitæ*, and afterwards of Marcion, had no countenance from the principles or practice of orthodox Christians! This affords a presumption, at least, that the work quoted by Barbeyrac had not Justin M. for its author; at any rate, the passage proves too much, and therefore it will not serve for the decision of the present controversy.

* *Morale des Peres*, c. ii. § 7.

“*Irenæus*,” says Barbeyrac, “speaks of the Samaritan woman as being a fornicatrix, because she had married many times*.” But there is nothing in the words of Irenæus which implies, that he supposed the Samaritan woman to have been wont to marry one husband *after the decease* of another † ; or that he understood the words of the gospel in any other sense than that in which Jerome and every other commentator of note understand them.

Barbeyrac has made a large commentary on a passage in *Athenagoras* ‡, which, it is imagined, condemns second marriages.

Every one conversant in ecclesiastical antiquity, knows that Athenagoras was, in many particulars, an ill-informed Christian, and one who blended Platonic notions with the doctrine of Scripture : so that his sentiments as to second marriages, be they what they will, cannot go a

* “*St Irenee traite la Samaritaine de Fornicatrice, pour s'estre mariee plusieurs fois.*” c. iv. § 14.

† “*Miserante Domino Samaritanæ illi prævaricatrici, quæ in uno viro non mansit, sed fornicata est in multis nuptiis.*” Adv. Hæres. iii. 17. edit. Massuet.

‡ C. xxviii. p. 223.—226. edit. Lindneri. At that place there are some notes worthy of perusal.

great way in forming this mighty "chain of tradition."

Although we should leave Barbeyrac in possession of an obscure authority*, from an obscure writer, we cannot allow him to found his proof on the authority of *Theophilus*, Bishop of Antioch, whom he has egregiously mistranslated.

Theophilus says, that "among the Christians, the union of one man and one woman is observed;" that is, the Christians are *monogamists*, in opposition to the received sense of the word *polygamists*; and what Theophilus said of his contemporaries, may be said of all Christians at this day. Barbeyrac, however, chuses to translate the phrase [*Μονογαμία τηρεται*] thus: "The Christians, as such,—take care not to marry more than once;" or, "are sure not to marry a second time †." He understood Greek; what then shall we say of such a translation?

Barbeyrac says, that *Clemens Alexandrinus* defines marriage to be, the first union which is

* Much might be said for shewing that Athenagoras speaks of polygamy and illicit connections with women, not of second marriages. The question turns chiefly on the sense of the word *ἐπιγαμιν*.

† "Les Chrétiens, comme tels — se donnent garde de se marier plus d'une fois." c. iv. § 14. This colloquial form of language is imitated in the translation.

“contracted according to the law, between a
 “man and a woman, for the procreating of le-
 “gitimate children *;” and the translator adds,
 by way of inference from the words which he
 puts in the mouth of Clemens Alexandrinus,
 that, “according to this definition, a *second* union
 “is not truly a marriage.”

Let us see, however, whether the following
 be not a more just translation. “Now, mar-
 “riage is the union of a man and a woman, for
 “the purpose of procreating children legiti-
 “mately : it is the first [or the earliest] union
 “instituted by the law of God †.”

The next passage quoted by Barbeyrac from
 Clemens Alexandrinus, runs thus in his transla-
 tion. “Every one of us has liberty to marry,
 “according to the law, what woman he chuses ;
 “I speak of a first marriage ‡.”

* “Clement d’Alexandrie, Strom. ii. 23. définit
 le mariage, la premiere union qui se fait selon la loi,
 “entre un homme et une femme, pour procreer des
 “enfans legitimes. Une seconde union n’est donc pas
 “un vrai mariage, selon cette definition,” c. iv.
 § 15. Barbeyrac joins the *first* [ἡ πρώτη] with *union*,
 [συνδοι.], and yet his argument seems to join it with
marriage [γάμος]. This he could not do openly, for
 γάμος ἡ πρώτη, would have been false Greek.

† Γάμος μὲν ἐν ἐστὶ συνδοῦς ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ἡ πρώτη
 κατὰ τὸν νόμον, ἐπὶ γνησίων τέκνων σπορά. Strom. i. ii.
 c. 23.

‡ “Chacun de nous a le pouvoir d’espouser, selon

I should incline to paraphrase the words of the original after this manner. “Every Christian, without exception, may marry whom he chuses, provided always that there be no impediment by the divine law, [κατὰ τὸν νόμον γαμεῖν]. In mentioning this general permission, I speak of first marriages *.”

Barbeyrac appears to have understood the passage in this sense: “All Christians may marry *once*, but no Christian may marry *twice*.” It is more probable, however, that Clemens Alexandrinus alludes to the rule, which began to prevail in his own times, of excluding ecclesiastics from the liberty of second marriages.

In this view, the sense of Clemens Alexandrinus will be, that all Christians may marry once, but that second marriages are not permitted to all; for, according to an interpretation of Scripture then received, a bishop must be, “the husband of one wife.”

The only other passage which Barbeyrac quotes from this writer on the present subject, is that fanciful one, exhibiting, as it should seem,

“la loi, quelle femme il veut : j’entens en premières nocés.” c. iv. § 15.

* Ἀλλ’ ὁ καθ’ ἑκάστον ἡμῶν, ἡν ἂν βέλῃται κατὰ τὸν νόμον γαμεῖν, τὸν πρῶτον λέγω γάμον, εἰς τὴν ἐξουσίαν. Strom. l. iii. c. 11.

a parallel between polytheism and polygamy * ; and, consequently, having no relation to second marriages.

“Tertullian,” says Barbeyrac, “in answering the accusations of lewdness brought against the Christians, observes, that so far from abandoning themselves to any thing of that nature, they limited to one woman the natural use of the sex in marriage ; and, after he had given himself up to Montanism, he did but express the like sentiments in stronger words †.”

The quotation from the *Apology* of Tertullian is very obscure ; or, to speak more properly, it is unintelligible ‡.

Barbeyrac might have produced many passages in which Tertullian condemns, and even

* *Και ὡς εἰδωλολατρῖαι ἐκ τῆς ἑνὸς εἰς τὰς πολλὰς ἐπινεμῆσις ἐστὶ θεῶν. ἕτως ἡ πορνεία ἐκ τῆς ἑνὸς γαμμοῦ εἰς πολλὰς ἐστὶν ἐκπτώσις.* Strom. l. iii. c. 12.

† “Tertullien, dans son Apologetique, repond aux accusations d'impurete intentees contre les Chretiens, que bien loin de s'abandonner a rien d'approchant, ils bornent meme a une seule femme l'usage naturel du sexe dans le mariage. Quand ce Pere eut donne dans le Montanisme, il ne fit que s'exprimer plus fortement sur ce sujet.” c. iv. § 16.

‡ “Christianus ad sexum nec foeminae mutat.” Apol. c. 46. Here some words have been either omitted or incorrectly copied by transcribers.

execrates second marriages. The very first words of his treatise *de Monogamia* are, “The heretics take away marriage, the carnal men reiterate it; the former do not marry at all, the latter marry more than once*.”

By “the heretics,” he is understood to mean the followers of Marcion; and there can be no doubt that the phrase “carnal men,” describes those whom, in common language, we should call “orthodox Christians,” that is, those who remained within the pale of the church, instead of following Tertullian, who held that Montanus was the Comforter [Paracletus] promised by our Lord †.

From the tenor of Tertullian’s treatise *de Monogamia*, it is plain that the Christians of his

* “Hæretici nuptias auferunt, Psychici ingerunt. Illi nec semel, illi non semel nubunt.” *De Monogamia*, in pr.

† It was bold in Tertullian thus to apply a phrase, which St Paul uses to describe those who have no right to the name of Christians. *ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐδίδεται τὰ τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ Θεῷ*. i. Cor. ii. 14. That by *Psychici* Tertullian meant the Christians, is plain from his own words, *adversus Praxeam*, c. 1. “Et nos quidem postea agnitio Paracleti atque defensio disjunxit a *Psychicis*.” It may be observed, in passing, that Tertullian takes the divine mission of Montanus for granted, and imagines that the whimsies of that visionary ought to give law to the Apostles.

age, or, at least of his country, entered into second marriages without scruple or hesitation, and that he himself was imbued in fanaticism and heresy. In evidence of this, some passages are added in a note *. In general, they are

* “[*Psychici*] Monogamiæ disciplinam in hæresin exprobant, nec ulla magis ex causa Paracletum negare coguntur, quam dum existimant novæ disciplinæ institutorem, et quidem durissimæ illis, ut jam de hoc primum consistendum sit in generali retractatu, an capiat Paracletum aliquid tale docuisse, quod aut novum deputari possit adversus Catholicam traditionem, aut onerosum adversus levem sarcinam Domini? De utroque autem ipse Dominus pronuntiavit, dicens [l. dixit] enim, *adhuc multa habeo quæ loquar ad vos sed nondum potestis portare ea; quum venerit Spiritus Sanctus, ille vos ducet in omnem veritatem*; satis utique prætendit ea acturum illum quæ et nova existimari possint, ut nunquam retro edita, et aliquanto onerosa, ut idcirco non edita.” d. Monogamia, c. 2. After having vainly endeavoured to elude the arguments in favour of second marriages drawn from the doctrines of St Paul, Tertullian has recourse to a desperate hypothesis; “ita res exigebant, ut [Paulus] omnibus omnia fieret, quo omnes lucrifacerat, parturiens illos donec formaretur Christus in ipsis, et calefaciens, tanquam nutrix, parvulos fidei, docendo quædam per veniam, non per imperium, (aliud est enim indulgere, aliud jubere), proinde temporalem licentiam permittens, denuo nubendi propter infirmitatem carnis, quemadmodum Moyses repudiandi propter duritiam cordis. Et hic itaque redemus supplementum sensus istius; si enim Christus abstulit quod Moyses præcepit, quia *ab initio*

too absurd to admit of a translation, which might offend many, and could edify none. I venture, however, to translate one passage, which plainly

“ *non fuit sic*, nec sic ideo ab alia venisse virtute reputabitur Christus, cur non et Paracletus abstulerit, quod Paulus indulsit? quia et secundum matrimonium ab initio non fuit, nec ideo suspectus habendus sit, quasi spiritus alienus, tantum ut Deo et Christo dignum sit quod superinducitur. Si Deo et Christo dignum fuit duritiam cordis tempore expleto compescere, cur non dignum sit et Deo et Christo tempore collectiore discutere? Si justum est, matrimonium non separari, utique et non iterare honestum est. Denique apud seculum utrumque in bona disciplina deputatur, aliud concordiae nomina, aliud pudicitiae. Regnavit duritia cordis usque ad Christum, regnavit et infirmitas carnis usque ad Paracletum. Nova lex abstulit repudium, habuit quod auferret; nova prophetia, secundum matrimonium, non minus repudium prioris, sed facilius duritia cordis cessit, quam infirmitas carnis,” *ib. c. 14.* There is much more raving to the like purpose, and the tendency of the whole is to prove that the perfection of Christian morals is only to be found in the rhapsodies of Montanus.

Mosheim says, “ Montanus was not so devoid of reason as to suppose himself to have been *the Paraclete*, or the Holy Spirit; he only asserted, that the Holy Spirit spake by him: But the *obscure* language of Tertullian, who very often calls Montanus by that *name*, has been the sole cause of the inaccurate manner in which both ancients and moderns have treated this subject.” [Quod vero et veteres et recentiores sententiam suam ambigue, nec satis luculenter expresserunt, Tertulliani unice obscu-

indicates the situation of the unfortunate man's mind. "Dido, the Queen of Carthage, shall
 "rise up in judgement against Christian women;
 "for she, being a fugitive in a foreign soil, and
 "about to become the chief foundress of a
 "mighty state, had good reason to seek to be
 "united in wedlock with the sovereign of the
 "country; and yet she chose rather to *burn*
 "than to *marry* a second time *."

Thus speaks Tertullian, "whose authority
 "might have influenced the professions, the

ritas effecit, qui Montanum sæpissime *Paracletum* nominat: cujus quidem verba et sermonis genus imitati sunt.] d. Reb. Christian. ante Constantin. M. p. 413. After having thus contradicted every body, and laid all the blame on the obscurity of Tertullian's language, he thus concludes: "All that remains for us to suppose is, that Montanus was diseased both in body and mind, and perhaps might be charged with a pious fraud." [Hoc unum relinquitur, ut animo hominem et corpore etiam ægro-tasse credamus, nisi forte piæ fraudis eum arguere velimus.] And thus Mosheim unravels his whole web; for, if we suppose Montanus to have been disordered in his judgement, and suspect him of knavery, all that Tertullian and other writers have said of him will be abundantly probable.

* "Exsurget Regina Carthaginis, et decernet in
 "Christianas, quæ profuga et in alieno solo, et tantæ
 "civitatis cum maxime formatrix, cum Regis nup-
 "tias ultro optasse debuisset, ne tamen secundas eas
 "experiretur, maluit e contrario *uri* quam *nubere*,"
ib. c. 17.

“ principles, and even the practice of his contemporaries !”

He is one link in Mr Gibbon’s “ chain of tradition,” and the chain breaks at him ; for, although his *judgement* be decidedly against second marriages, his *testimony* proves that the Christians of his age held them to be lawful ; nay more, that the doctrine of the lawfulness of second marriages served as one of the marks for discriminating the orthodox church from the deluded and frantic votaries of Montanus.

And this naturally leads me to point out a mistake into which Mr Gibbon has fallen.

Barbeyrac charged the ancient Christian writers with some erroneous opinions respecting morals ; and having been contradicted by Pere Ceillier, he undertook not only to support, but to aggravate his charge. This he did hastily and carelessly, and in the style of a prejudiced and angry controversialist, but without ascribing to the Christians at large those erroneous opinions which he partly found, and partly imagined that he had found, in the works of the ancient Christian writers.

Mr Gibbon, not adverting to the distinction between the sentiments of individuals and the tenets and practice of the Catholic church, supposes every thing that Barbeyrac reports as the sentiment of any Christian writer, to have been

the doctrine admitted and established among Christians. Hence, for example, he says, that second marriages were held to be “a scandalous offence against Christian purity.”

We return to the “chain of tradition.” Barbeyrac quotes *Minucius Felix* as saying, that “a Christian either does not marry at all, or only marries once.” He adds, that “in another passage, Minucius *seems* to make a second marriage be considered as adultery *.”

Here there are two quotations from Minucius. The sense of the former is ambiguous; and Barbeyrac himself hesitates as to the sense in which he is willing that the latter should be understood.

According to Barbeyrac, Minucius says, that “a Christian either does not marry at all, or only marries once.” This might seem to imply that the Christians preferred celibacy to marriage. Minucius, however, means no such thing, nor could he with truth have said it.

The passage may be thus translated. “We willingly cleave to the bond of one marriage, and we either limit to one woman our desire of having children, or we remain in pure ce-

* “Minucius Felix dit, *qu'un Chretien ou ne se marie jamais, ou ne se marie qu'une fois*, c. 31. Il semble ailleurs faire regarder les secondes noces, comme un *adultere*, c. 24.”

“libacy*.” This is said in answer to the charge of promiscuous lewdness brought against the Christians; and it has no necessary connection with the case of second marriages. Minucius probably meant to contrast the behaviour of the Christians with that of the Heathens, who frequently put away their wives that they might marry again; and who, for the most part, were neither chaste in wedlock nor in a single life.

The second quotation from Minucius does not consider second marriages as adultery. The author, speaking of the capricious varieties in Pagan worship, says, “the wife of one husband hangs her garland on some statues; but to do this on others, is permitted to her only who is the *wife* of many [multivira], and the woman who can number most *adulteries* is scrupulously sought after †.”

Every scholar knows that, in certain religious rites among the Heathens, those women alone officiated who had never been married unless to one man; but no scholar will say, that there were other religious rites in which those women

* “Unius matrimonii vinculo libenter inheremus, cupiditatem procreandi aut unam scimus, aut nullo,” c. 31.

† “Alia sacra coronat *univira*, alia *multivira*, et magna religione conquiritur, quæ plura possit *adulteria* numerare,” c. 24.

alone officiated who had married a *second* husband after the death of the *first*.

Barbeyrac durst not maintain such a proposition ; but he laid hold of the ambiguity of the words *multivira* and *adulteria*, ventured to draw from them an “it should seem,” [*il semble*], and then left it to others to make what use of them they could.

In common language, *multivira* means one who is connected with many men, and *adulteria* means whoredoms. It is perfectly plain that Minucius alludes to women who never thought of marrying, to the prostitutes who attended the temples of Venus.

And therefore it is to be hoped that we shall hear no more of this quotation from Minucius, as reprobating second marriages, or as placing them on a level with *adultery*.

“Origen,” says Barbeyrac, “lays it down for certain, that second marriages exclude from the kingdom of heaven *.”

To this I might answer, 1. That Origen, for reasons well known, and unnecessary to be

* “Origene pose en fait, comme une chose indubitable, que *les secondes nocces excluent du Royaume de DIEU.*” — “Nunc vero et secundæ, et tertiæ, et quartæ nuptiæ, ut de pluribus taceam, reperiuntur, et non ignoramus quod tale conjugium ejiciet nos de regno Dei.” in *Luc. Homil. xvii.*

mentioned, could not be a competent judge of the propriety or expediency either of a first or of a second marriage.

2. That to quote Origen for proving what were the principles and the professions of the Catholic church, is to assert the orthodoxy of Origen.

3. That, as appears from the context, Origen opposed his own sentiments to the practice of the Christians of that age ; and so his evidence directly contradicts the *tradition* for which Barbeyrac quotes it.

But another answer occurs, and that is, that Barbeyrac has either grossly misunderstood, or wilfully misinterpreted Origen. That learned and fanciful man, by “ kingdom of God,” meant not “ heaven,” or “ a blessed hereafter,” but “ some transcendent and peculiar state of glory ;” and so he explains himself in the sequel of the very sentence quoted by Barbeyrac *.

* “ Sicut enim ab Ecclesiasticis dignitatibus non solum fornicatio, sed et nuptiæ repellunt, neque enim Episcopus, nec Presbyter, nec diaconus, nec vidua possunt esse digami, sic *forsitan* et de coetu primitivorum immaculatorumque Ecclesiæ, quæ non habet maculam neque rugam, ejicietur digamus. Non quo in æternum mittatur incendium, sed quo partem non habeat in regno Dei. — *Puto* enim monogamum et virginem, et eum qui in castimonia perseverat, esse de Ecclesia Dei ; eum vero qui sit

Barbeyrac quotes another passage from Origen, as if it condemned second marriages. But, without attempting to support or vindicate the argument which Origen uses, let me observe, that he is there speaking of the case of an old man who marries again *. *This* it is which he condemns, and possibly there are worse heresies in his voluminous works.

Thus have I examined all the passages that Barbeyrac, in his fourth chapter, quotes from the Christian writers who lived before the establishment of Christianity by law ; and the result, so far as agreeable to the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon, is, that an ambiguous passage in Athen-

“ digamus, licet bonam habeat conversationem, et
 “ et cæteris virtutibus polleat, tamen non esse de Ec-
 “ clesia, et de eo numero, qui non habet rugam et
 “ maculam, aut aliquid istiusmodi : sed esse de se-
 “ cundo gradu, et de his qui invocant nomen Domi-
 “ ni, et *qui salvantur quidem* in nomine Iesu Chri-
 “ sti, nequaquam tamen coronantur ab eo.” *ib.* In this, as in many other passages of Origen, we may discern that desire of being wise above what is written, and that unhappy spirit of refinement, which led a very learned, and, I doubt not, a very worthy man, into numberless errors and heresies : yet, notwithstanding all this, Origen was not guilty of the extravagance imputed to him by Barbeyrac.

* La Morale des Peres, c. iv. § 18. “ *μὴτε τὴν
 “ τελευταίαν τῆς γάμου μενῆς ἐν γάμῳ ἄλλῃν γυναῖκα λαβεῖν.*”
 In Joann. vol. ii. p. 295. edit. Huet.

agoras seems to condemn second marriages; and that Tertullian, a fanatic of the chief sect of fanatics, not only condemns them, but presumes to censure the orthodox Christians for maintaining their lawfulness. To these authorities, Mr Gibbon may, if he chuses, add that of Origen. Of such materials is a chain of tradition, which extends through three centuries, composed!

Not satisfied with a general reference to Barbeyrac, Mr Gibbon makes two observations on his own authority. He says, that they who married a second time “were soon excluded “from the honours, and even from the alms of “the church.”

He ought not to have said “soon;” for as to his first observation, he might have learnt of Barbeyrac, that the practice of excluding Digamists from the Episcopal office, had its origin about the end of the *second*, or the beginning of the *third* century*; and he might have remarked, that Tertullian ventures to reprehend the orthodox Christians of his age for suffering Digamists to preside in their assemblies†.

* *Morale des Peres*, c. iv. § 23.

† “Digami præsent apud vos,” d. Monogamia, c. 12. It is true that Tertullian elsewhere says,

As to Mr Gibbon's second observation, that Digamists "were *soon* excluded from the alms "of the church," I know not on what it is founded. Barbeyrac quotes a singular passage from Jerom*, which he understands in that sense; but be the sense of the passage what it will, we cannot, with any propriety, apply the word "soon" to the times of Jerom, as if he had lived in the early days of Christianity.

Perhaps Mr Gibbon alludes to the *widows* who performed the office of deaconesses in the primitive church, and who, no doubt, were supported by the contributions of the church which they served. There might be good reason for not allowing them to marry again; or, if they did, for withdrawing the contributions of the church from them. To illustrate this by a familiar example: Certain members of the Church of England are governors of an hospital; they

"Usque adeo quosdam memini digamos loco dejectos," d. Exhort. Castit. c. 7. This, however, cannot afford any proof of a constant practice, especially when we consider the former quotation from the same author. The notes [e] and [h] by Rigaltius, on Tertullian's treatise ad Uxorem, l. i. c. 7. well deserve to be perused. They speak the language of an intelligent and candid Roman Catholic.

* Morale des Peres, c. iv. § 21. The passage quoted is contra Jovinian. l. i. p. 28.

require that the matron of the hospital be a single woman, or a widow ; and they declare that if she marry, she shall lose her office, and the salary annexed to it ; and yet, from such an example, it would be somewhat *rash* to conclude, that those members of the Church of England either recommended celibacy, or blamed second marriages.

CHAPTER V.

IN connecting his *fifth* secondary cause with the *fourth*, Mr Gibbon says, “ *But* the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a *temporary enthusiasm*, will return by degrees to its natural level, and will resume those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition.” i. 581.

What shall we say? Were the virtues of the primitive Christians, to which, in the preceding section, Mr Gibbon had ascribed the *rapid progress* of Christianity, merely the effects of a *temporary enthusiasm*, exalting or debasing the human character?

Surely *this* cannot be his meaning; for we have already seen, that he began his Disquisitions with these solemn and serious words: “ Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an *obvious*, but a *satisfactory* answer may be returned, that it was owing to the convincing

“ evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author.” i. 536.

Since then God was the author of Christianity, as Mr Gibbon expresses it, and his ruling providence was its *primary* cause, a *temporary enthusiasm* can hardly be numbered among the *secondary* causes of its rapid progress.

And, therefore, we may suppose that the *But* of Mr Gibbon is used instead of the obsolete word *Moreover* ; and that it has no more connection with what went before, than an Anglo-Saxon & would have had in like circumstances.

Be this as it may, the human character having returned by *degrees* to its natural level, “ resumes those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition.” And now we may expect to see the Christians act just as other men, neither *exalted*, by enthusiasm, above the state of humanity, nor *sunk*, by the like enthusiasm, below the standard of right reason.

The *fifth* secondary cause of the rapid progress of Christianity is said to have been “ the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which *gradually* formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire *.” What Mr Gibbon had said just

* Mr Gibbon paints after a sketch given by Voltaire. “ Les assemblées secrètes, qui bravoient d’-

before, explains the meaning of the word *gradually*; for he observes, that “the Christian religion grew up in silence and obscurity.”

And here a question arises: If the union and discipline of the church were established in consequence of the human character returning by *degrees* to its natural level; if the Christian religion grew up *in silence and obscurity*; and if it *gradually* formed an independent and increasing republic; how are these things consistent with its *rapid progress*? Yet the rapid progress of Christianity is the fact admitted, and the purpose of Mr Gibbon’s inquiry is to discover what were its secondary causes.

Every intelligent and attentive reader will observe, that, in treating of this *fifth* cause, Mr Gibbon does not confine his researches to the early times of Christianity, but that he “blends “in eloquent confusion*” the events which are said to have happened at different times.

Thus he observes, “The community of goods, “which had agreeably amused the imagination

“abond, dans des caves et dans des grottes, l’autorité des Empereurs Romains, formerent peu à peu “un état dans l’état.” *Siecle de Louis XIV.*

* This is an expression which Mr Gibbon employs in speaking of Burnet, the author of the *Theory of the Earth*, i. 565. and not without cause; for, in flowery language and bad reasoning, *that work* can hardly be paralleled.

“ of Plato,—was adopted, *for a short time*, by
 “ the primitive Christians *.” i. 591. “ A
 “ scheme of policy—was adopted for the use of
 “ the *first* century.” i. 583. “ The Episcopal
 “ form of government appears to have been
 “ introduced *before the end of the first century.*”

* Here Mr Gibbon notes, that “ Mosheim, in a
 “ particular dissertation, attacks the common opi-
 “ nion with very inconclusive arguments.” I have
 seen, but not perused the dissertation so much slight-
 ed by Mr Gibbon. I have perused another work of
 Mosheim, relating to the same subject, which con-
 tains the following passage : “ The vulgar opinion
 “ about a *community of goods* among Christians, is
 “ the rather to be exploded, as some think they have
 “ a handle given them by it to attack Christianity
 “ itself. Hence, some modern enemies of that reli-
 “ gion make it their chief study to persuade the ig-
 “ norant, that the precepts of Christ are better suit-
 “ ed to deserts, and to the sands of Lybia, than to
 “ well-ordered states and governments. Were *that*
 “ the case, such precepts could very hardly, if at all,
 “ be considered as *divine.*” [Tanto diligentius vul-
 garis de communione bonorum opinio exstirpanda est,
 quanto multis illa videtur aptior ad vim Christianæ
 religionis divinitati inferendam: recentiorum enim
 religionis Christianæ hostium aliqui id agunt potissi-
 mum, ut rerum imperitis persuadeant, Christi precep-
 ta desertis potius locis, et arenis Lybicis, quam civi-
 tatibus et rebus publicis bene constitutis, accommo-
 data esse: quod si verum esset, vix, ac ne vix qui-
 dem, pro divinis haberi possunt.—Institutiones His-
 toriæ Christianæ Majores, sæc. i. part. i. c. iv. § 4.
 not. *.]

i. 585. Such was the “mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed
 “*more than a hundred years after the death of*
 “*the Apostles.*” i. 586. “*Towards the end of the*
 “*second century*, the churches of Greece and
 “Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods.” i. 586. “The office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishops of the
 “principal cities ; and these aspiring prelates,
 “who *soon* acquired the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primates, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their Episcopal brethren
 “the same authority which the Bishops had so
 “*lately* assumed above the college of Presbyters.” i. 589. “The prelates of the *third* century imperceptibly changed the language of
 “exhortation into that of command.” i. 587. And, to add but one example more : Mention is made of the discordant decrees pronounced by the councils of Ancyra and Illiberis, after the persecution which Diocletian raised against the Christians, *towards the close of the third century.* i. 598.

Thus Mr Gibbon takes a wide view of the Christian church from its infancy until its mature state ; and, from the history of different ages, he draws his conclusion, That an independent republic was gradually formed in the Ro-

man state ; and that the union and discipline of the church, became the *fifth* secondary cause of the *rapid progress* of Christianity.

One might be apt to suppose, that a less mutable form of ecclesiastical government would have been better adapted for producing that change which actually took place, than one *imperceptibly* varying from a college of Presbyters to the lofty dominion of Metropolitans and Primates ; and that the contradictory decrees of provincial synods, such as those of Ancyra and Illiberis, would have weakened, instead of strengthening, the discipline of this great and independent republic.

It is remarkable, that during the course of three centuries, there should not have been any false brother found to disclose this Christian plot, and no Heathen magistrates vigilant or judicious enough to receive his information.

And it is singular, even in our own age, an age of fanciful theories, that the rapid progress of Christianity should be ascribed to the *Usurpations* of Metropolitans and Primates.

In his preamble to the account of the origin and progress of this new government, Mr Gibbon observes, that “ the primitive Christians
“ were dead to the business and pleasures of the
“ world ; but that their love of action, which
“ could never be entirely extinguished, soon re-

“vived, and found a new occupation in the government of the church.” i. 581.

“Dead to the business of the world,” is an uncommon expression, and therefore we must, first of all, endeavour to have its meaning ascertained.

By “business of the world,” Mr Gibbon cannot mean “the diligent exercise of any particular calling;” for, in that sort of *business* the Christians were, of all men, the most *alive*. With them, diligence in their calling was a duty prescribed in the most explicit terms, and enforced by argument *. And Mr Gibbon himself admits, that, in conformity with the precepts of St Paul, the primitive Christians were inured to “œconomy, and all the sober and domestic virtues.”

It should seem, then, that “the business of the world” implies the being occupied in public offices, either civil or military.

In the Roman state, as in all other states, some civil offices were burdens, not benefits; and, instead of being solicited, were imposed. The primitive Christians could not have pleaded any exemption from them; and undoubtedly they must have borne their share of such

* Ephes. iv. 28. ; 1 Thess. iv. 11. 12. ; 2 Thess. iii. 8. 10. 12.

burdens in equal proportion at least with that of the Heathens of their own rank.

It may well be supposed that offices of honour and emolument were rarely granted to the primitive Christians. The mediocrity of their station in life, the ill-will of the Heathens, and their own abhorrence of the popular worship, all serve to lead to this conclusion.

These observations, however, must be limited to the more early ages of the church : for, in the third century, the face of things changed. When the Christians became more numerous, and were strengthened, to appearance at least, by the accession of the wise and the learned to their society, they, no doubt, mixed in “ the “ business of the world” more than their predecessors had a fair opportunity of doing ; and there are even examples of their having been admitted into the favour and confidence of Heathen Emperors.

Military offices ought to be viewed in a light somewhat different.

From the time at which sovereign power at Rome ceased to be hereditary, the armies of the empire gradually became its masters. As, in our days, there is nothing short of the dignity of the Dey to limit the ambition of an Algerine recruit, so was it in the Decline of the Roman empire. Every intrepid, active, and unprinci-

pled soldier, however obscure his birth and original station, might have aspired to the Purple; and indeed it is astonishing to see the number of those who ascended from the meanest military offices to absolute dominion.

There could not have been any difficulty in finding soldiers for armies possessed of so great influence and power; and it is natural to suppose that such military service ill accorded with the dispositions of the primitive Christians. To bear arms in defence of the state, was agreeable to their principles; but if any of them chose war as a trade, *that* must be ascribed to corruption of morals, and to a relaxation of religious discipline.

Mr Gibbon indeed says, that “it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers. This indolent, or even criminal disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to the contempt and reproach of the Pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the Barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect?” i. 580.

He adds, in a note, “As well as we can judge from the mutilated representation of Origen [l. viii.], his adversary Celsus had

“ urged this objection with great force and candor *.”

It is to be presumed that Mr Gibbon has urged the objection with as much force and candor as Celsus did, and yet it is not unanswerable.

Origen had no right to speak for the Christians at large; so it is of no moment whether he, as an individual, made a convincing or only an evasive answer to the objection of Celsus.

In another passage, Origen speaks of “ just wars †,” by which he, probably, understood those of the defensive kind. But granting him to have altogether disapproved of the use of arms, the only fair inference deducible from

* It is unlucky, that Origen should have given a *mutilated* representation of the argument: for *any* specimen of the *candor* of Celsus would have been a literary curiosity.

† Barbeyrac quotes this passage immediately after the passage on which Mr Gibbon rests his objection, *Morale des Peres*, c. vii. § 20. not. 1.; and his embarrassment, whether real or affected, is remarkable. He proposes this dilemma: either Origen speaks of wars which are just with respect to men, considered as such, and not as Christians; or, *he contradicts himself*; as, if the last part of the alternative were a thing strange and inadmissible. *He* must be a poor logician, indeed, who cannot extricate himself from this dilemma. Origen, as an honest man, is a good witness in matters of fact; but in matters of opinion, we cannot rely on him.

this is, that Origen, who, in many particulars, thought differently from the church, did, in this particular, adopt an opinion which sectaries of various denominations have held.

The primitive Christians could not be indolent and pusillanimous spectators of the fate of the Cæsarean empire ; for they generally believed, that the coming of Antichrist, the greatest of all calamities, was only delayed by the preservation of that empire *.

I much doubt of the story of *the thundering legion*, and I give no credit to *that* of *the Theban* : yet it is evident from those stories, that there prevailed a general tradition of many Christians having served in the Imperial armies long before the civil establishment of Christianity †.

Mr Gibbon adds, that the Christians were “ dead to the pleasures of the world.”

If by “ pleasures of the world,” be meant “ immoral gratifications of sense,” such as were reprobated, in theory at least, by the most eminent of the Heathen philosophers, the observation is just ; and since the expression is scriptural, and has obtained a fixed signification in the

* See Hurd. Introduction to the study of the prophecies, ii. 15. 19. ; and Hallifax. Sermon. v. 152.

† Tertullian. Apol. c. 5. ; Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 5.

English language, we are hardly at liberty to ascribe any other to it.

The result then of the whole, when accommodated to the matter of fact, is, that the primitive Christians were, in a great measure, excluded from offices of honour and emolument, that they disliked war as a *trade*, and that they had no ambition to rise to military commands *.

It seems that such men were not sufficiently occupied; and therefore, in order to amuse their idleness, or gratify their love of action, they invented ecclesiastical government.

Granting, for a moment, that the primitive Christians were not only excluded from civil offices of trust and emolument, but that they held all war to be unlawful, and absolutely refused to bear arms; it remains to be explained, why a deep-laid and wide plan of ecclesiastical policy should have been devised, persisted in, and executed by such men.

* “The *situation* of the first Christians,” says Mr Gibbon, “coincided very happily with their religious scruples; and their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service, than to exclude them from the honours of the state and army.” i. 581.; and yet his own book demonstrates, that in the decline of the Roman empire, no rank, however obscure, excluded men from those honours.

Experience does not lead us to the conclusion which Mr Gibbon has formed. The Mennonites, for instance, and the people called *Quakers*, are debarred, by their principles, from civil offices; and they hold all war, defensive as well as offensive, to be unlawful; yet their love of action never excited them to undertake what the primitive Christians, in circumstances supposed to be similar, are said to have accomplished.

Mr Gibbon, in treating of ecclesiastical government, seems to hold the antiquity of what he calls *Episcopal Presbyters*: But I know not whether the *Old Dissenters* of England will chuse to admit him as a proselyte from *Episcopacy*, or rely on him as their champion in defence of the *classical form*; for the controversy in his hands is equally poised.

He thinks that the Episcopal form of government was introduced before the end of the first century; and as he explains himself in a note, during the life of the Apostle St John; and yet he observes, that in the Epistle of Clemens, the contemporary of St John, no traces of Episcopacy, either at Corinth or at Rome, are to be discovered*.

* Here are the words of Mr Gibbon. " See the Introduction to the Apoccalypse. Bishops, under the name of *Angels*, were already instituted in se-

My subject does not lead me to enter the lists in the cause either of *Episcopacy* or of *Presbytery*; neither could my opinion serve at all to terminate a controversy in which wise and

“ven cities of Asia.” i. 584. not. 110. He adds, “And yet the Epistle of Clemens, which is probably of as ancient a date, does not lead us to discover any traces of Episcopacy either at Corinth or Rome.” We may remark, in passing, that here Mr Gibbon admits the book of the Apocalypse to have been written before the end of the first century, and that he is willing to hold the epistle of Clemens as equally ancient.—A preceding note [104.] must not be overlooked. “The aristocratical party in France, as well as in England, has strenuously maintained the divine origin of Bishops: *But* the Calvinistical Presbyters were impatient of a superior, *and* the Roman Pontiff refused to acknowledge an equal. See Fra. Paulo.” It was unnecessary to quote the *whole works* of Father Paul for proving that the Pope would not acknowledge an equal: but it can hardly be proved from *any* of the works of Father Paul, that, as the words seem to imply, the Pope did not acknowledge the divine right of bishops.—Mr Gibbon has not explained what he understands by “Aristocratical party in France.” If he means “the nobility,” it is fit to remind him, that the French Calvinists were, in that sense of the phrase, “an aristocratical party:” if he means “those who maintained Episcopal government,” then the note will imply, that, “in France, the maintainers of Episcopal government considered it to be of divine original;” a great truth, but which hardly deserved a place in Mr Gibbon’s notes.

learned men have taken different sides : But, as a friend of peace, and of the religion of peace, I must rejoice to see that the wisest and the most learned of those who differ as to the origin of church-government, are willing to suspend, at least, their disputes ; and oh, that the armistice might continue until the brethren be, once more, of one accord * ! Indeed *this* is not a season for internal controversy, while Moses and Jesus Christ, and even the FIRST CAUSE, are assailed with a boldness which will astonish the nineteenth century, should it prove more virtuous and learned than the eighteenth.

I cannot allow myself to suppose, that, in such times as ours, Mr Gibbon meant to revive or inflame the controversy respecting the original form of church-government among Christians.

Mr Gibbon, after having weighed the pre-

* Καθ' ἡμέραν τε προσκαρτεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, κλάντες τε κατ' αἶκον αὐτοῦ, μετελαμβάνον τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλίασει καὶ ἀφιλότητι. There follows, ὁ δὲ Κύριος προσετίθει τὰς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. Acts, ii. 46. 47. Pity that this method of propagating the gospel in domestic parts were not more generally practised. The narrative begins with προσκαρτεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ. *These* are significant words, and “thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine “hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine “eyes ; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of “thy house, and on thy gates.”

tensions to antiquity on either side, drops the scales, and at once pronounces in favour of a system inconsistent with the regimen of bishops, as having no diversity in clerical rank, and with the Presbyterian model, as having no subordination of judicatories. “The scheme of polity,” says he, “which, under the approbation of the apostles, was adopted for the use of the first century, may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, or of Corinth. The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire, were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution.” i. 583.

Mosheim attempted to reconcile the discordant parties in the Christian church, by tracing their various systems back to the times of primitive antiquity. Mr Gibbon appears to have adopted this theory, but without taking notice of some concessions which Mosheim judged it expedient to make.

“The church of Jerusalem,” says that author, “enjoyed for a season much honour and great authority. This is manifest from the Acts of the Apostles. The Christians of Antioch submitted their dispute concerning the Mosaic law to the judgement of the church at Jerusalem, *Acts*, xv.; and it is most likely

“ that other churches imitated their example.
“ St Paul, although divinely called to perform
“ the offices of an Apostle, was peculiarly studious
“ in obtaining for himself, and for the
“ doctrines which he taught, the approbation
“ of that church, and of the Apostles, Galat. i.
“ 18. ii. 7. 8. 9. Such authority, however,
“ took its rise, not from any thing personal in
“ the church at Jerusalem, for she never affected
“ any pre-eminence over the rest of the
“ churches; but from this, that the Apostles,
“ appointed by Jesus Christ to judge of matters
“ respecting religion, presided in that assembly.
“ Yet, to say the truth, she might, possibly, have
“ been consulted on dubious cases, even when
“ the Apostles were absent: For the Holy Spirit
“ had descended miraculously not on the
“ Apostles alone, but on all at Jerusalem who
“ professed Christ, Acts, ii. 1. &c.: and hence
“ there were more men in that city than in the
“ other churches illuminated from above, and
“ furnished with divine gifts. I doubt not that
“ the Ephesian church, while St John dwelt at
“ Ephesus, had a like authority among the
“ churches of Asia; and I am even of opinion,
“ that, out of respect to any church in which
“ an apostle had for some time presided, the
“ neighbouring churches occasionally took a
“ model of teaching and discipline from her.

“ Nay more, lest I should seem to make too
 “ scanty concessions, I am very willing to grant
 “ that, on new opinions in religious matters
 “ being set forth, and on controversies being
 “ stirred, the apostolical churches, that is, the
 “ churches founded and taught by the Apo-
 “ stles themselves, were, for sometime, consult-
 “ ed*.”

* “ Hierosolymitanæ quidem ecclesiæ per tempus
 “ aliquod magna fuit dignitas et auctoritas, quod ex
 “ Actis Apostolorum patet. Andiocheni controver-
 “ siam suam de legis Mosaicæ præstantia ecclesiæ
 “ hujus judicio subiciebant, Act. xv. Idem alias
 “ fecisse ecclesias, verisimillimum est. Paulus, divi-
 “ nitus licet ad obeundum Apostoli munus vocatus,
 “ id tamen in primis agebat, ut se suamque discipli-
 “ nam Apostolis et coetui Hierosolymitano probaret
 “ et commendaret, Galat. i. 18. ii. 7. 8. 9. Verum
 “ hujus auctoritatis radix non tam in ecclesia erat
 “ Hierosolymitana, quæ nunquam supra reliquas
 “ eminere voluit, quam in Apostolis Iesu Christi, qui
 “ Hierosolymitano coetui præsidebant, judicesque a
 “ Christo rerum ad religionem pertinentium consti-
 “ tuti erant. Apostolos proprie consulebant, non
 “ Hierosolymitanum coetum. Quanquam, ut verum
 “ fatear, et ipse hic coetus, absentibus etiam Aposto-
 “ lis, magis quam reliquæ Christianorum familiæ,
 “ rebus in dubiis, in consilium vocari poterat. Mul-
 “ to enim plures, quam in ceteris ecclesiis, homines
 “ erant Hierosolymis lumine divino aliisque donis
 “ coelestibus instructi, quoniam non in Apostolos
 “ tantum, verum etiam in universum, qui tum Chri-
 “ stum ibi profitebatur, populum Spiritus Sanctus
 “ mirabiliter delapsus erat, Act. ii. 1. &c. Non du-

Granting that Mr Gibbon did right in pronouncing positively where Mosheim hesitated, yet still it must be obvious, that the independence and equality of different religious societies could never have promoted "the union of the Christian republic."

Mr Gibbon proceeds thus : "The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of *the Prophets*, who were called to that function without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities ; and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of

"bito, Ephesinæ ecclesiæ, dum S. Johannes in illa vixit, parem inter Asiaticas auctoritatem fuisse ; immo cunctis ecclesiis, quibus aliquamdiu Apostolorum aliquis præfuit, hunc habitum esse honorem opinor, ut vicinæ ab illis ecclesiæ docendi agendique exemplum interdum peterent. Hoc etiam plus, nec enim præter rem difficilis ero, largior, si quis velit ; concedam nimirum omnibus ecclesiis Apostolicis, id est, illis, quas ipsi Apostoli construxerant et erudiverant, hoc, per tempus aliquod, datum fuisse, ut novis forte de religione sententiis propositis et disputationibus commotis consulerentur," D. Reb. Christian. ante Constant. M. p. 153.

This work of Mosheim is little known with us ; and, therefore, it was judged proper to print the original passage at large, that it might be compared with the translation. It is no very easy task to render the verbose language of Mosheim into tolerable English.

“the Spirit in the assembly of the faithful.” i. 583.

It is singular, that an author, who, no doubt, has studied the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St Paul, should suppose that there was any want of discipline* in the early part of the first century.

That in the apostolical times *some* form of discipline *did* exist, even the Independents admit, in common with the favourers of diocesan Episcopacy, and of the Presbyterian model. What *that* form was, and whether it was, in its nature, unalterable, have been the main questions agitated during the disastrous contests about ecclesiastical regimen.

* It seems also to be supposed, that the gifts conferred on the Apostles were not sufficient to supply the want of human learning, and that something more was necessary for the propagation of the gospel. On this opinion, probably borrowed from Mosheim, it is needless to enlarge. But the want of human learning, since apostolical gifts have ceased, is a want indeed to him who proposes either to teach or to defend the doctrines of Christianity. Let men of warm imaginations think what they will, it is fit to remind them, that they *must* not despise any weapon which Providence has been pleased to put within their reach, for opposing the assaults of unbelievers. May this admonition, given by a layman, be as candidly received as it is faithfully meant !

But *the scheme of policy* “ adopted, according “ to Mr Gibbon, under the approbation of the “ Apostles,” is different from every scheme which “ the hostile disputants,” as they are too truly called, have at any time adopted.

Here it behoves us to ascertain the sense in which Mr Gibbon understands the word *Prophet*.

In the New Testament, the expression “ to “ prophecy,” sometimes respects the interpreting of scripture ; and under this is comprehended the application of ancient prophecies to evangelical events : sometimes, again, it respects the foretelling of things to come, and especially of things which were to befall the church*.

* Mr Gibbon adds this note : “ For the prophets of the primitive church, see Mosheim, *Dissertationes ad Hist. Eccles. pertinentes*, tom. ii. p. 132. 208.” The title of the tract here referred to is, *De Prophetis Ecclesiæ Apostolicæ Dissertatio*. As that tract cannot be made intelligible by an abridgement, it may suffice to observe, that it does, in no sort, aid the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon. Mosheim appears to have put a very wide sense on the word *prophecy*; and even to have comprehended under it the discerning of the thoughts of men. In that way he explains the difficult text, i. Cor. xiv. 24. 25. Mosheim has frequently treated of the prophets in the apostolical age, and not without some diversity, or at least vacillancy of opinion. For example, he says, *Institutiones Historiæ Christianæ Majores*, sæc. i. part. ii. c. ii. § 10. “ This power

Mr Gibbon says, that certain persons were *called* under the approbation of the Apostles, to assist occasionally in the function of *prophets*;

“ of prophecy is justly and universally reckoned
 “ amongst the gifts which, by special favour from
 “ God, were appropriated to the Christian church
 “ in its infancy. Every one, who laid claim to this
 “ gift, was allowed to speak in the public assem-
 “ blies; but lest any impostor should deceive the
 “ people, others, of whose pretensions to the cha-
 “ racter of *prophets* there was full evidence, perform-
 “ ed the function of judges, and separated the *true*
 “ from the *false*, i. Cor. xiv. 24.; and that things
 “ might be the better conducted, the Apostles them-
 “ selves furnished marks by which the prophets
 “ whom God had inspired might be distinguished
 “ from those who were actuated by fancy or self-
 “ conceit, i. Cor. xii. 2. 3.; i. John iv. 1.”— And he
 “ says, in a note, “ For some reason which I cannot
 “ figure, most men have persuaded themselves that
 “ the persons whom the books of the New Testa-
 “ ment term *prophets*, were merely expounders of the
 “ scriptures, and especially of the predictions utter-
 “ ed by God under the times of the Old Testament.
 “ All the circumstances related of such prophets
 “ are inconsistent with this opinion, and it is incon-
 “ sistent with the nature of the thing. Who can
 “ deny, that the holy penmen of the New Testa-
 “ ment rather used the word *prophet* in the sense
 “ generally affixed to it by the Jews of their own
 “ times, than in a sense unnecessary, new, and un-
 “ heard of? Now, amongst the Jews, a prophet was
 “ not one skilled in expounding the predictions of
 “ the ancient prophets, but a messenger of the di-
 “ vine will, and an interpreter sent, out of the com-

that they were called without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities ; and, as often as they felt *the divine impulse*, they poured forth

“ mon course of things, by God himself. I should
 “ be apt to imagine, that, by the command of God,
 “ and through his inspiration, the *prophets* under the
 “ gospel did occasionally explain some parts of holy
 “ writ. But I can, by no means, be induced to
 “ believe, that they who were distinguished by that
 “ appellation, had no other employment ; and that
 “ to have *the gift of prophecy*, was just the same
 “ thing as to have *the gift of interpreting the prophe-*
 “ *cies.*” [Facultas hæc vaticinandi merito inter
 dona illa ubique refertur, quæ nascenti civitati
 Christianæ, singulari beneficio divino, propria fue-
 runt. Licebat omnibus qui hoc sese munere prædi-
 tos dicebant esse, publice loqui ; at ne quis planus
 populum deciperet, ceteri, quos signis minime dubiis,
 constabat *prophetas* esse, judicium agebant partes, ve-
 rosque vates a falsis segregabant, i. Cor. xiv. 24. ;
 idque ut felicius succederet negotium, ipsi Apostoli
 notas suppeditaverant, quibus prophetæ a Deo com-
 moti dignoscerentur ab illis, quos aut impetus natu-
 ræ, aut arrogantia creaverat, i. Cor. xii. 2. 3. ;
 i. John, iv. 1.——Nescio quonam modo evenerit ut
 plerique sibi persuaderent eos, quos Novi Fœderis
 libri *prophetas* appellant, interpretes fuisse divinorum
 librorum, in primis vaticinationum a Deo, stante An-
 tiquo Fœdere, dictatarum. Respuit hanc opinionem
 omne id quod de *prophetis* hisce scriptum legitur.
 Immo res ipsa respuit. Quis neget sanctos scripto-
 res vocabulum *propheta* ea notione adhibuisse, quæ,
 tum temporis, inter Judæos maxime usurpari solebat,
 minime vero sine necessitate novam illi et inauditam
 potestatem subjecisse ? *Propheta* vero nunquam Ju-

the effusions of the Spirit in the assembly of the faithful.

The principal thing to be observed in this description of the prophets is, that Mr Gibbon

dæis homo fuit dexteritate oracula priscorum vatum declarandi præditus, verum divinæ voluntatis nuntius et interpretis extraordinarius ab ipso Deo missus. Crediderim facile, *prophetas* hos interdum, jussu et instinctu divino, partem quandam divinorum librorum explanasse : nullo vero modo adducar, ut existimem nihil fecisse aliud illos, qui hoc nomine insignes erant, donumque prophetiæ idem esse, quod facultatem oraculorum divinorum sententiam enodandi.] To the same purpose, but more briefly, he speaks, d. Reb. Christian. ante Constant. M. sæc. i. § xl. p. 129. 130. But in that work of his which is best known among us, he seems to have given a still more extensive signification to the word *prophet*; for he says, "It is certain that they who claimed the rank of *prophets*, were invested with the power of censuring publicly such as had been guilty of any irregularity," History of the Church, part ii. c. 2. § 9. translated by M'Claine. I have chosen, in the text, to treat of the *prophets* of the apostolical age according to the sense of that word, as generally received, without meaning either to adopt or reject that greater latitude of interpretation for which Mosheim contends. And here it will be remarked, that what Mosheim says in his Ecclesiastical History is inconsistent with the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon : for Mosheim could never have meant that, in the apostolical times, persons without distinction of age or sex, women, boys, and girls, "were invested with the power of censuring publicly such as had been guilty of any irregularity."

represents the persons of whom he speaks, as having been *divinely inspired* ; for, according to him, they “ felt the divine impulse,” and “ they poured forth the effusions of the Spirit *.”

Here, then, were persons endued from Heaven with the gift either of interpreting the Scriptures, or of foreseeing events.

Now, by *whom* were they called to the exercise of such gifts, or to the performing of the function of *prophets* ? Not by the Apostles themselves ; for Mr Gibbon says, that they were called “ under the approbation of the Apostles :” We must, therefore, suppose, that they were called by the church, that is, by the Christian society at large.

It follows, that a person endued with pro-

* We must not, on any account, imagine, that these expressions are used ironically ; for then the sense of the passage would be, “ That certain persons in the primitive church, either knavishly pretended to the gifts of prophecy, or, from a spirit of fanaticism, supposed themselves to be possessed of such gifts ; and that, in compliance with the desires of the Christian multitude, and to perfect a scheme of policy, the Apostles allowed some of those false prophets to speak in the assembly of the faithful.” This cannot be the meaning of the passage ; for it is adverse to the professed purpose which Mr Gibbon had in treating of the secondary causes of the rapid growth of Christianity.

phetical powers, could not exercise them in the assembly of the faithful, without a call from the Christian society at large, confirmed by the Apostles.

There must be some mistake here ; for no vestige is to be found in the New Testament of an election of this nature.

No doubt, the Apostles, having the gift of *the discerning of spirits*, had power to prohibit him who falsely arrogated to himself the gifts of prophecy, from attempting to deceive the people by his fictions or his reveries * ; and there can be as little doubt, that they did, on suitable occasions, exercise such power : but there needed no call from the church at large, or approbation of the Apostles, for authorising a person endued with prophetic gifts to exercise them ; and, on the other hand, the church at large, and the Apostles, could not, even by common consent, say to a prophet, “ Thou shalt not prophesy.”

That power which St Paul assumed by divine authority, was of a very different nature. He did not say *who* should be prophets, and *who* not ; but he regulated the *exercise* of the gifts of prophecy in that manner which was agreeable to order, and most conducive to the

* See above, p. 103.

purposes of edification * ; and it may be fairly presumed, that a like course was followed by the other Apostles.

This much may suffice as to the supposed *call* of the *prophets*.

It remains to inquire, whether the function of prophets was discharged, as Mr Gibbon imagines, “ without distinction of age or sex.”

If, by *prophets*, “ the foretellers of events” be meant, Mr Gibbon justly supposes that the Holy Spirit is not circumscribed as to his instruments ; and that infinite wisdom may employ young or old, and persons of the one sex as well as of the other, for accomplishing the ends of its providence, in every capacity and in every office : and should it appear that, in this particular, no distinction was indeed made at the promulgation of the Gospel, all intelligent Christians will acquiesce in the ways of God without farther inquiry.

But Mr Gibbon, however zealous he may be to point out the completion of ancient prophecies, ought not to take it for granted, that they were literally fulfilled as to all particulars described in the figurative language of the Prophet Joel, who says, in the name of the Almighty, “ And it shall come to pass afterward,

* i. Cor. c. xiv.

“ that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
 “ and your sons and your daughters shall pro-
 “ phesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your
 “ young men shall see visions *.” For, when
 the miraculous gift of tongues was bestowed, St
 Peter declared the prophecy of Joel to be ac-
 complished; although the old men had not
 dreamed dreams, neither had the young men
 and the daughters of Jerusalem uttered pro-
 phecies, or seen visions.

I cannot discover, from Scripture, that, in
 the apostolical times, boys and girls were endu-
 ed with the gifts of prophecy, in any sense of
 the word †.

It is possible that, by *prophets*, Mr Gibbon
 meant not “ foretellers of events,” but “ inter-
 “ preters of Scripture;” for he gives them the
 ambiguous appellation of “ prophetic *teach-*
 “ *ers.*”

* Joel, ii. 28. The meaning of the prophecy, as
 explained by St Peter, is, “ That the operations of
 the Holy Spirit shall be made manifest.”

† Philip the deacon had “ four daughters, vir-
 “ gins, [παρθένοι], who prophesied,” Acts, xxi. 9.
 But *παρθενος* properly signifies one grown up or arri-
 ved at woman’s estate; and hence was that whimsi-
 cal etymology of the word devised, *παρθενος δια το*
παρακαταθειν την ηλικιαν. Besides, it is not certain in
 what sense the daughters of Philip are said to have
prophesied.

That, in the apostolical times, persons, “without distinction of age or of sex,” were admitted to be teachers in a public assembly of Christians, may well be questioned; for it is not clear, that boys and girls were admitted to the conferences spoken of in i. Cor. xiv.

St Paul would not suffer married women to speak in church, or even to propose difficulties, and ask a solution of them *there*. “Let them keep silence,” said he; and in support of this injunction, he appealed to the judgement of his hearers, in these words, “It is a shame for a woman to speak in the church *.”

From analogy, and from the manners of his times, we may well conclude, although that precise case be not stated, that a like silence was required of maidens; and that they were left to be privately instructed by their parents, as married women were by their husbands.

There is one passage, indeed, where St Paul speaks of women *prophesying* in a public assembly of Christians †; but that passage may, as

* i. Cor. xiv. 34. 35.; i. Tim. ii. 11. 12. On this occasion, as on others, St Paul spake in conformity with established notions and manners. This will account for the strong expression, “it is a shame,” [*αισχρον γαρ εστι*]. literally, “it is a foul deed.”

† i. Cor. xi. 5. This passage has perplexed the commentators. In 1767, there was published, under

probably, relate to the foretelling of events, as to the interpreting of Scripture.

Mr Gibbon thus concludes his remarks on the *prophets*: “But these extraordinary gifts

the name of the Prorektor of the university of Gottingen, a dissertation *De doni prophetici variis gradibus in Ecclesia Christiana*, 4to. That author supposes *γυνή προσευχομένη ή προφητεύουσα*, to mean, “a woman who prays or sings psalms.” He observes, that St Paul is not *there* speaking of any extraordinary or miraculous gifts, and that this interpretation will serve to reconcile i. Cor. xi. 5. with i. Cor. xiv. 34. His words are: “Antequam de variis doni prophetici gradibus plura dicamus id adhuc addimus, iis nos accedere, qui etiam in Novi Testamenti libris semel *προφητεύουν* de iis dici arbitrantur, qui ne quidem ipsi divini spiritus motu extraordinario agitati, sed eadem plane ratione, qua nonnullis Veteris Testamenti locis carmina divina ab aliis quoque prophetis confecta canentes *προφητεύειν* dicuntur, inter quos Saulum cum prophetis vaticinantem, Baali prophetas, et Davidis cantores *προφητεύοντας* referimus. Vix enim persuadere nobis possumus, aliam notionem huic voci subjectam esse posse, i. Cor. xi. 4. 5. Nondum enim de donorum extraordinariorum usu, sed de ordine in conventibus religiosis quibuscunque Christianorum observando, capite hoc integro, disserit Paulus, neque id tantum vult, ipsos docentes et propriis verbis precantes adesse viros nudato capite, mulieres tectas, sed in quocunque sacro conventu. Recte igitur plures interpretes observarunt, *προσευχέσθαι και προφητεύειν* esse descriptionem totius cultus divini, quemadmodum nostro etiam tempore canere et precari de cultu divino integro plures etiam complectente

“ were frequently abused or misapplied by the
 “ prophetic teachers. They displayed them at
 “ an improper season, presumptuously disturbed
 “ the service of the assembly, and by their
 “ pride or mistaken zeal, they introduced, par-
 “ ticularly into the apostolic church of Corinth,
 “ a long and melancholy train of disorders. As
 “ the institution of prophets became useless,
 “ and even pernicious, their powers were with-
 “ drawn, and their office abolished.” i. 583.

In proof of the disorders introduced by the *prophets* into the church of Corinth, Mr Gibbon refers not only to the epistles of St Paul, but also to the epistles of Clemens to the Corinthians.

We may well suppose that the admonition

“ partes nonnunquam dicitur. Facillimam hæc in-
 “ terpretatio pandit viam conciliandi hunc locum
 “ cum c. xiv. 34. Addere enim D. Pauli verbis,
 “ quod interpretibus pluribus placet, “ Loqui pu-
 “ blice quidem licet mulieribus divino spiritu impul-
 “ sis, at nisi revelationem habeant, tacent,” nexui
 “ integro est contrarium, in quo de sermonibus aliis
 “ præter eos, qui spiritu prophetico habebantur, non
 “ est sermo. De “ quibuscunque sermonibus” intelli-
 “ gere verba Pauli nos ipsa oppositio cogit. Pro-
 “ phetis enim, ait, loqui quidem licet divino motis
 “ impulsu, ita tamen, ut alter alterum suo ordine ex-
 “ cipiatur, mulieres vero in ecclesia tacent. Canen-
 “ tes autem nota carmina divina sua comitari voce,
 “ absque dubio licebat mulieribus.”

and censure pronounced by St Paul had the effect of removing the abuses of which he complained. As to the second epistle of Clemens, although its genuineness were admitted, it has not even the most distant relation to the subject of which Mr Gibbon is treating; and as to what he says of the first epistle, he seems, in some measure, to be supported by the authority of Archbishop Wake *.

Nevertheless, the evil of which Clemens complained, appears to have arisen rather from

* “ When St Paul wrote his first epistle to the
“ Corinthians, the two great things that seemed to
“ have especially called for it, were, *first*, the divi-
“ sions of the church, upon the account of their
“ teachers, and through their vain conceit of their
“ own spiritual gifts; and, *secondly*, the great mis-
“ take that was getting in among them concerning
“ the nature of the future resurrection: and how-
“ ever the Apostle, by his writing and authority, did
“ for the present put a stop to the one, and set them
“ right as to the other; yet it seems after his death
“ they began again to fall not only into the same
“ contentions, but into the same error too, that had
“ caused them so much trouble before. Now, this
“ gave occasion to St Clement to write the present
“ epistle to them.” Discourse concerning the Apo-
stolical Fathers, c. ii. § 12. 13. The Archbishop
supposes that the contentions among the Corinth-
ians in the days of Clemens, arose through “ their
“ vain conceit of their own spiritual gifts.” But
he does not limit the case to the particular gift of
prophecy.

the factious spirit of individuals in the church, than from the pride, presumption, or mistaken zeal of the prophets *.

* Thus, in the very beginning of his epistle, Clemens speaks of “that foul and unholy dissension for reign and strange to the elect of God, which a few rash and self-willed men have inflamed to such madness,” &c. [της τε αλλοτρίας και ζήνης τοις εκλεκτοις τῷ Θεῷ, μιᾶρας και ανοσις πασιως ἢ ὀλιγα πρωτωπα προπιτη και αυθαδη ὑπαρχοντα, εις τοσντον ανοιαις ἐξεκασαν. κ. τ. ε.]

Again, at § 3. Clemens says, “So the base have been raised up against the honourable, those of no reputation against the eminent, the foolish against the wise, and the young against the aged; therefore righteousness and peace are far departed from you, because every one hath forsaken the fear of God, and is become blind in faith towards him; neither walketh by the rule of his commandments, nor hath a conversation as is fitting in Christ: But each man proceedeth according to his own evil desires, having taken up an unjust and ungodly emulation, whereby death also entered into the world.” [ἔτως ἐπ’ ἡγεσθησαν οἱ αἰτιμοὶ ἐπὶ τῷ εντιμῷ, οἱ ἀδοξοὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ενδοξῷ, οἱ ἀφρονεῖς ἐπὶ τῷ φρονιμῷ, οἱ νεοὶ ἐπὶ τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ. Δια τὸ το πορρω απέσιν ἡ δικαιοσυνὴ και εἰρήνη, ἐν τῷ ἀπολειπτειν ἕκαστον τὸν φόβον τοῦ Θεοῦ και ἐν τῇ πίστει αὐτῶ ἀμβλυωπησθαι μηδὲ ἐν τοῖς νομιμαῖς τῶν προσηματων αὐτῶ πορευεσθαι, μηδὲ πολιτευεσθαι κατὰ το καθήκον τῷ Χριστῷ, ἀλλὰ ἕκαστον βαδίζειν κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶ τὰς πονηράς, ζῆλον ἀδικῶν και ἀσεβῶ ἀνελήφτοας, δι’ ὃ και θάνατος εἰσηλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.] Here there is what may be termed *the leading notion* of the epistle; and it seems inconsistent with the hypothesis, that Clemens meant to treat of “the pride, presumption, or mistaken zeal of the prophets.”

Be this as it may, Mr Gibbon ought to have explained more particularly what is to be understood by the phrase, “the *powers* of the pro-

More particularly still, he says, at § 14. “Wherefore, men and brethren, it is more just and holy that we be obedient unto God, than that we follow them who, through pride and an unsettled spirit, are become the authors of abominable dissension; for, we shall bring upon ourselves no small hurt, but rather great peril, if we rashly yield to the wills of men, whose aim is, by strife and sedition, to alienate us from that which is right.” [Δικαιον εν και όσιον, ανδρες αδελφοι, υπηκοες ήμας μαλλον γενεσθαι τω Θεω, η τοις εν αλαζονεια και ακαταστασια μυσαρς ζηλς αρχηγοις εξακολουθειν. βλαβην γαρ ε τυχεσαν, μαλλον δε κινδυνον υποιτομεν μεγαν εαν ριψοκινδυνως επιδωμεν εαυτες τοις θελημασι των ανθρωπων. οιτινες εξακοντιζουσιν εις εριν και εασεις, εις το απαλλοτριωσαι ήμας τε καλως έχοντος.]

At § 44. mention is made of the excesses to which the multitude, incited by their seditious demagogues, had run; “for we see that you have put out from the ministry some men of good conversation.” [ορωμεν γαρ ότι ενις ήμεις μετηγαγετε καλως πολιτευομενς εκ της — λειτεργιας.]

And at § 47. Clemens says, “Beloved, what we hear is shameful, exceedingly shameful indeed, and unworthy of the Christian profession; that, by means of one or two persons, the best established, the ancient church of Corinth rises in sedition against her priests.” [αισχυρα αγαπητοι, και λιαν αισχυρα, και αναξια της εν Χριστω αγωγης ακρεσθαι, την βεβαιωτατην, και αρχαιαν Κορινθιων εκκλησιαν δι εν η δυο προσωπα, εαταιζειν προς τας πρεσβυτερς.]

At § 54. he pathetically exclaims, “Who is there generous among you, who tender-hearted, who fill-

“phets were *withdrawn*.” We have seen that, according to his hypothesis, the prophets were called by the multitude, under the approbation of the Apostles. Are we to suppose, that when this institution of prophets became useless, and even pernicious, the church ceased to call them, or at least that the Apostles withheld their approbation of such call? Hence it might be inferred, that the institution was a device of human policy. But the words of Mr Gibbon cannot be so understood; for he himself admits, that the prophets were divinely inspired; and therefore we may suppose his meaning, however ambiguously and improperly expressed, to be, that “it pleased God to withdraw such “miraculous gifts whenever they became unnecessary, or were egregiously misused.”

“ed with charity? let him say, *if, for my cause, there “be dissension, and strife, and schisms, I depart, I go “whithersoever ye will, and I do whatever the people “commandeth, only may the flock of Christ, with the “priests set over it, be in peace. Whoso doeth this “shall obtain for himself great renown in the Lord, “and every place shall welcome him.*” [τις ἐν ἐν ὑμῖν γενναῖος, τις εὐσπλαγχνός, τις πεπληροφορημένος ἀγάπης; ἐπάτω. εἰ δὲ ἐμὲ εἰσὶς, καὶ ἐρις, καὶ σχίσματα, ἐκχώρῃ, ἀπειμι, & ἐὰν βελησθῇ, καὶ ποίω τὰ προσασσόμενα ὑπὸ τῶ πηγῆς. μόνον τὸ ποιμνίον τῆ Χρίστῃ εἰρηνεύεται, μετὰ τῶν καθιεσμένων πρεσβυτέρων. τὸτο ὁ ποιήσας ἐαυτῷ μέγα κλέος ἐν Κυρίῳ περιποιήσεται, καὶ πᾶς τόπος δεῖξεται αὐτοῦ].

This appears to be a rational interpretation of the passage, and it is agreeable to the truth of history ; but whether Mr Gibbon meant to convey that sentiment to his readers, I do not pretend to determine.

Perhaps it may be thought, that I have dwelt too long on these expressions of Mr Gibbon, That “ the *prophets* were called to that “ function without distinction of age or sex ; “ and as often as they felt the divine impulse, “ poured forth the effusions of the Spirit in the “ assembly of the faithful.”

But the truth is, that Mr Gibbon has spoken so inaccurately of the prophets of the apostolical age, as to make the institution appear, at the first view of his account of it, a mass of imposture and fanaticism, tempered with human policy ; and therefore it became proper not only to state the fact as to those prophets, but also to attempt to reconcile the language of Mr Gibbon with his avowed principles.

Under this head of “ the union and discipline of the Christian church,” supposed to have been “ the *fifth* secondary cause of the “ rapid growth of Christianity,” Mr Gibbon treats of the variations in ecclesiastical government during the first ages of the church, and of the contests among the clergy for power and pre-eminence. He also enlarges on the prac-

tice of pronouncing excommunication, and of imposing public penance. How these things should have contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity, he has not explained.

One circumstance of which he speaks, deserves more particular attention. It is thus expressed: "A generous intercourse of charity
" united the most distant provinces, and the
" smaller congregations were chearfully assisted
" by the alms of their more opulent brethren.
" Such an institution, which paid less regard
" to the merit than to the distress of the ob-
" ject, very materially conduced to the progress
" of Christianity." i. 595.

So far he says well. It was reasonable for humane Pagans, when they saw the pious liberality of believers, to inquire into the nature and evidences of THE RELIGION OF LOVE. Such inquiries can never hurt the cause of Christianity, and, in general, are favourable to it. If, in this way, any Pagans were converted, their conversion might be said to have been owing to the virtues of the Christians.

What follows in Mr Gibbon is more exceptionable: "The Pagans," says he, "who were
" actuated by a sense of humanity, while they
" derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence of the new sect."

It seems, then, that the humane Pagans,

while they did justice to the benevolence of the new sect, continued to deride its doctrines ; so that it was not by the means which I have supposed, that Christian benevolence “ very materially conduced to the progress of Christianity.”

Mr Gibbon adopts a different system. He says, “ The prospect of immediate relief, and of future protection, allured into the hospitable bosom of the church many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, sickness, and of old age.” i. 595. That is, the Heathens, who dreaded poverty, sickness, and old age, sought *that* relief from the liberality of Christians which they could not expect even from the other Heathens, “ who were actuated by a sense of humanity ;” and so they professed their belief in Christ !

It will be remembered, that this, according to the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon himself, could not possibly have happened in the early ages of the church, when it was composed of poor and mean persons. The Christians must have become opulent before their liberality could have bribed the Heathens to seek *their protection*, the protection of men exposed to the hourly hazard of banishment and confiscations !

On this subject, Mosheim expresses himself

with some degree of warmth. “They,” says he, “who feign other causes of the rapid growth of Christianity, do but repeat dreams to us, and such as cannot be relished, unless by men ignorant of the natural dispositions and history of mankind. They imagine themselves to have made some mighty discovery, while they affirm, that the charity of Christians towards the poor allured a multitude of sluggish and debauched persons to make profession of faith in Christ. It seems then, that the minds of men are so constituted, that, to alleviate hunger for a time, and to obtain scanty and homely food, they would be willing to incur the immediate hazard of reputation and life, submit themselves to a severe discipline, like the Christian, and, in one word, amidst tortures, and punishments even unto ignominious death, that they would display invincible fortitude in maintaining a religion to which from indolence alone they had attached themselves ! There is as little common sense in the rest of what the concealed enemies of Christianity prate on this subject *.”

* “*Alias qui comminiscuntur religionis Christianæ tam subito propagatæ caussas, somnia nobis recitant, quæ nullis placebunt, nisi rerum et morum humanorum imperitis. Magnum sese nescio quid*

ALL that now remains is to recapitulate briefly the Five secondary causes, which, in the judgement of Mr Gibbon, "so efficaciously as-

"reperisse autumant, qui amorem Christianorum
 "erga pauperes turbam ignavorum et vitiosorum ho-
 "minum allexisse statuunt, ut in Christi verba jura-
 "rent. Ita scilicet homines animis affecti sunt, ut
 "famis ad tempus sedandæ parcique et duri victus
 "consequendi causa, præsentissimum honoris vitæque
 "periculum adire, severæ sese disciplinæ, qualis
 "Christiana, subjicere, religionem denique, propter
 "inertiam susceptam, constantissime inter tormenta
 "et supplicia, ad mortem usque ignominiosam, tueri
 "cupiant. Nihil saniora sunt cetera, quæ his de re-
 "bus garriunt, qui sacris Christianis insidiantur."
 Institutiones Historiæ Christianæ majores, sæc. 1.
 part. i. c. iv. § 13. Mosheim expresses himself with
 more asperity of style than is used from layman to
 layman: When indeed we laymen find it necessary
 to abuse the clergy, we are apt enough to adopt the
 general language of Mosheim, but then we call
 them, or we say enough to make others call them,
 "interested knaves," rather than "foolish praters
 "and visionaries."

Upon this subject, however unpromising, Mr Gibbon enlarges; in particular, he says, That "the zeal
 "and activity of the Christian clergy were united in
 "the common cause; and the love of power, which,
 "under the most artful disguises, could insinuate it-
 "self into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, ani-

“sisted the *truth* of the Christian religion.”
i. 599 *.

His first proposition, as we have seen, is, that Christianity became victorious over the esta-

“mated them to increase the number of their sub-
“jects, and to enlarge the limits of the Christian
“empire. They were destitute of any temporal
“force, and they were for a long time discouraged
“and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil
“magistrate. But they had acquired, and they em-
“ployed within their own society, the two most effi-
“cacious instruments of government, rewards and pu-
“nishments; the former, derived from the pious li-
“berality, the latter, from the devout apprehensions
“of the faithful.” i. 591.

Here there are several things remarkable. 1. It is supposed that the bishops and martyrs of the primitive church looked upon the rest of the Christians as *their subjects*. 2. That the love of power, under the most artful disguises, animated the primitive clergy to collect alms, and to bestow them on the indigent. The enemies of our religion have not said so: for Lucian scoffs at the beneficence of the Christians, and Julian seems mortified at it. See *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. p. 595. not. 143. 3. Rewards are supposed to be some of “the most efficacious instruments of human government;” for the context will not allow us to understand the passage, of the moral government of God. 4. “The devout apprehensions of the faithful,” that is, the fear which the Christians had of public penances and excommunication, served to *increase* the number of Christians!

* Here, as on other occasions, I am much indebted to the writings of Bishop Watson and Dr Chelsum.

blished religions of the earth, by its very doctrine, and by the ruling providence of its great Author ; and his last, of a like import, is, That CHRISTIANITY IS THE TRUTH.

Between his first and his last propositions, there are, no doubt, many dissertations, digressions, inferences, and hints, not altogether consistent with his avowed principles. But much allowance ought to be made for that love of novelty which seduces men of genius to think and speak rashly ; and for that easiness of belief, which inclines us to rely on the quotations and commentaries of confident persons, without examining the authors of whom they speak.

I. The first secondary cause of the rapid growth of the Christian religion is said to have been, “ The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians ;” a zeal, when unsupported, and even repressed by secular power, of all things the most likely to check, instead of accelerating the growth of Christianity.

II. “ The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight or efficacy to that important truth *.”

* Mr Gibbon, in his recapitulation of *the five secondary causes*, i. 600. mentions the “ immediate expectation of another world,” instead of “ the doc-

This, however, must have been a primary, and not a secondary cause of the rapid growth of Christianity : for, if we may credit St Paul, “ Christ has abolished death, and has brought “ life and immortality to light, through the “ gospel *.”

III. “ The supernatural gifts ascribed to the “ Christians.” This, if understood of miraculous powers really exercised, ought to be ranked among the primary causes of the rapid growth of Christianity ; if understood of “ lying wonders,” it is hard to say, why the Pagans, who had fictitious miracles of their own, should have rejected them, and adopted what, in the present argument, must be considered as fables, the invention of a hated and persecuted sect.

IV. “ The virtues of the primitive Christians.” Mr Gibbon admits, not only that they were virtuous, but also that they were more virtuous than their Heathen contemporaries. But what made *them* to differ from *others* ? Let us answer, till we are better in-

“ trine of a future life.” But this is said through mere inadvertency ; for an opinion which arose from a wrong interpretation of some passages in Scripture, could only take place among those who were previously convinced of the authority of the holy books.

* ii. Tim. i. 10.

formed, “ The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works *.” So if the virtues of the primitive Christians did contribute, in some measure, to the rapid growth of Christianity, we must ascribe such effects, not to any secondary cause, but to the primitive cause of those virtues, *the grace of God*.

V. “ The union and discipline of the Christian republic.” This indeed would have strengthened the church, if not augmented the number of believers ; but between the apostolical times and the accession of Constantine, the Christians were not so studious as became them in preserving “ the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ;” neither was discipline, at all times, regularly and prudently maintained among them.

We read in Mr Gibbon of “ the mutual ho-

* Titus, ii. 11.—14.

“ stilities of the clergy, which sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church ;” of “ their turbulent passions, tinged with an additional degree of bitterness and obstinacy from the infusion of spiritual zeal ;” of “ the ambition of the Roman Pontiff, and the absolute sway of Cyprian over Carthage, and the provincial synods ;” of “ a controversy carried on without effusion of blood, which was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the parties ;” and of “ invectives and excommunications reciprocally hurled with equal fury and devotion ;” of “ discordant councils ;” of “ the lofty titles of metropolitans and primates which aspiring bishops acquired ;” and of “ the emulation of pre-eminence and power which prevailed among the metropolitans themselves.”

There also we read of bishops “ who were unfaithful stewards of the riches of the church, and lavished them in sensual pleasures, or perverted them to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury *.”

All this, and more to the like purpose, is related in a section which professedly treats of

* Decline and Fall, vol. i. p. 582. 588. 589. 590; 591. 594. 598.

the mighty consequences arising from "the union and discipline of the primitive church."

Thus it appears, that the things which Mr Gibbon considered as secondary or human causes, efficaciously promoting the Christian religion, either tended to retard its progress, or were the manifest operations of the wisdom and power of God.

THE END.

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